A REPLY TO THE SECOND PART OF THE AGE OF REASON.

[PRICE EIGHTEEN-PENCE]

A

REPLY

TO

THOMAS PAINE's

SECOND PART

OF THE

AGE OF REASON.

By GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B. A.

SEEST THOU A MAN WISE IN HIS OWN CONCEIT? THERE IS MORE HOPE OF A FOOL THAN OF HIM. PROV. XXVI. 12.

I AM NEVER ANGRY WITH ANY MAN FOR HIS OPINIONS, WHETHER HE BE A JEW, TURK, OR IDOLATER: HE MAY SPEAK HIS MIND FREELY TO ME, WITHOUT FEAR OF OFFENDING. I SHOULD EVEN BE GLAD TO HEAR WHAT HE HATH TO SAY, PROVIDED HE SAITH IT IN AN INGENUOUS, CANDID MANNER. WHOEVER DIGS IN THE MINE OF TRUTH, I LOOK ON AS MY FELLOW-LABOURER; BUT IF, WHILE I AM TAKING TRUE PAINS, HE DIVERTS HIMSELF WITH TEAZING ME, AND FLINGING DUST IN MINE EYES, I SHALL SOON BE TIRED OF HIM.

MINUTE PHILOSOPHER.

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1795.

TO

THE READER.

THAT part of *Thomas Paine*'s preface, which relates to himſelf, his impriſonment, and the dangers of his ſituation, will be intereſting to moſt readers, as well from their own ſingularity, as from their connection with that firſt of political events, the French revolution: but every man, who feels himſelf ſolicitous for the dignity of human nature, who glories in the prerogative of rationality, or is charmed by the lovelineſs of virtue, will obſerve, with humiliating ſympathy, a debaſement of his ſpecies, in the moſt aſtoniſhing, unprincipled, and unparalleled arrogance, to the laſt, of ſuch a contemptuous, ſelf-opinionated, ill-informed writer. His exceſs of folly will be lamented by all his friends, not eſtranged, like himſelf, from ſhame and modeſty: and his enemies will read his outrageous vaunts, united to ſuch exceſs of ignorance

rance and ſtupor, with that pleaſure, which reſults from a juſt expreſſion of mingled abhorrence, deriſion, and contempt. For my own part, his unprecedented infatuation almoſt ſtrikes me dumb with amazement. I am not acquainted with ſuch a compound of vanity and ignorance as *Thomas Paine*, in the records of literary hiſtory.

After premiſing theſe remarks, of which no man exiſting, I am perſuaded, at all reſpectable for ſoundneſs of intellect and rectitude of ſentiment, will controvert the juſtice, upon reading the preface and the work; what cenſure can poſſibly attach to a plain man, for ſpeaking his mind upon ſo plain a caſe, in the plaineſt language? Is it neceſſary for me to be tender in ſparing him, who has not ſpared, I do not ſay, Moſes and the apoſtles, but every believer of revelation? I neither eſteem myſelf, nor do I wiſh to be regarded, as one of your cold-complexioned mortals, who can endure to hear a ſilly blockhead, blind with ignorance, and beſotted with conceit, foaming out his own ſhame upon ſubjects infinitely beyond his acquirements, in a ſpirit of moſt audacious dogmatiſm, without riſing into indignation at the thought, and yielding

yielding to ſuch animated expreſſions of his feeling, as that indignation muſt ſupply. No man will be inſulted or deſpiſed by a writer of principle, tenderneſs, or modeſty, for want of knowledge, when his ſituation or capacity may have debarred him from the acquiſition of it: but if the ignorant will arrogate to themſelves all the privileges of learning, they muſt expect an unceremonious freedom of rebuke, and a ſharp admonition of their duty. Where I prove erroneous in my cenſure; where I engage in queſtions without a conſcientious reſpect for the public and for myſelf, without preparation, without talents, and without humility; I ardently wiſh a reſtoration to my duty and my ſenſes by an unrelenting infliction of ſimilar ſeverity: nor can I doubt but numbers will be forward to exerciſe this diſcipline, if an opportunity ſhould preſent itſelf. More than once have I blotted out expreſſions, from an apprehenſion of too great harſhneſs; and afterwards reſtored them to their place, out of a pure reſpect for truth, rectitude, and proportion.

In ſhort, *what I have written, I have written.* I adhere to the ſtyle of my pamphlet, upon review, with unconditional acquieſcence, as correſpondent to the

the *cauſe* itſelf, which diſdains, under ſuch aggreſſion, a lukewarm accommodation to timid prudery; as ſuited to the wild petulance, and groſs inefficiency, of *my opponent*; and as characteriſtic of that frankneſs and reſolution, which, I think, becomes *myſelf*.

——————— Demetri, teque, Tigelli,
Diſcipulorum inter jubeo plorare cathedras.
I, puer, atque meo citus hæc ſubſcribe libello.

Hackney, October 26, 1795.

A REPLY

A REPLY TO THE SECOND PART OF THE AGE OF REASON.

WHEN Sosthenes,* the Olynthian, and his partisans, were complaining with vehement indignation to Philip, king of Macedon, and father of Alexander the Great, that some of his attendants were perpetually calling them *rascally traitors;* Philip replied, that "the Macedonians were a race of blunt, unpolished rustics, and would call *a boat, a boat.*"

In my answer to the first part of the *Age of Reason*, I paid those acknowledgments of respect to the native talents, the intrepidity, and the patriotism of *Thomas Paine*, which sincerity demanded, and civilized manners dictate; and, if I am not deceived, my pen there exhibited a display of candour, scarcely merited by the slender information of my antagonist on the subject of debate, and certainly not commensurate to the rudeness and impotency of his attack. But as this forbearance does not appear to have made a suitable impression on his feelings, and the lectures of modesty have been read in vain to one, who seems, like the callous slaves in ancient comedy, to grow more hardy and ferocious from castigation; every severity of language, in consistency with truth, will now be not only an excusable animosity on my part, but a proportionate and equitable retribution. It is

* Plutarch, in his Apophthegms; and Suidas, in his Lexicon.

now time to adopt the leſs grateful mode preſcribed by the wiſe king of Iſrael, that of "anſwering the fool according to his folly, leſt he be wiſe in his own conceit."* The audacity of his aſſaults on thoſe venerable ſyſtems, which have conſtituted, and ſtill conſtitute, the delight, the hope, and the conſolation of multitudes, much wiſer and much better than himſelf, leaves no room for lenity in me, or complaint from him:

——————— belli commercia Turnus,
Suſtulit iſta prior, jam tum Pallante perempto.

I ſhould, however, have felt very little impulſe to my preſent undertaking from ſpontaneous diſpoſition, and much leſs from the vigour and ſolidity of our ſceptical declaimer, had I not conceived that the public, which regarded with ſome favour my former exertion in defence of revelation, might expect the ſame advocate to ſtep forwards on this occaſion alſo: nor was I wholly uninfluenced by a ſenſe of duty, from a conſideration of the ſubject itſelf under our diſcuſſion, which has engaged my thoughts for many years, and been, as it were, the concentration and convergency of all my ſtudies. In the mean time, though the approbation of numbers connected with the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of religion, would be rendered very dear to me, by their admirable talents and venerable virtues; I can expect, alas! but little gratification of this nature, though laboriouſly and conſcientiouſly occupied in the vindication of our common faith. As to ſuch miſerable craftſmen as the *Britiſh critics*, who have taken, in the very terms of their engagement with the public, a profligate ſacrament of immutable opinion;† who are not intereſted in divine revelation, but in human ſyſtems; who expect patronage from the pertinacity of their prejudices, and preferments from the virulence

* Prov. xxvi. 5.

† It gives me the moſt lively mortification, and the ſincereſt ſorrow, to perceive that *one* ſcholar at leaſt, of moſt extraordinary accompliſhments, ſhould co-operate with a review, profeſſedly undertaken, at a peculiar criſis, for the invariable ſupport of determinate principles; and therefore, of neceſſity, whatever thoſe principles may be, from a perfect indifference to truth. My judgment on the point is, I ſuppoſe, not correct

rulence of their defamation; men, who profeſſing themſelves examples and teachers of chriſtianity, underſtand no more the phraſeological *rationale* of the Bible, than *Mahometan Mufti*; and feel the ſpirit of it's precepts with no greater ſenſibility than the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*;—the applauſes, I ſay, of ſuch men as theſe would indeed be the ſevereſt ſatire, and could not fail to excite in the ingenuous votary of truth, an immediate ſuſpicion, that he was indubitably ſwerving from his rectitude of purpoſe, and diſgracing the conſiſtency of his life. The *men* I pity; but for the *writers*, I feel "a hatred, if poſſible, as ſtrong as nature, or irreconcileable as antipathy itſelf."

After this uncourtly ſalutation, and bidding them farewel in the lines of Phædrus, I ſhall direct myſelf to the work before me.

Hunc obtrectare ſi volet malignitas,
Imitari dum non poſſit, obtrectet licet;
Mihi parta laus eſt.

Our child of *reaſon* opens his treatiſe with aſtoniſhing ſolemnity, and promulgates his wiſdom in a tone of prodigious gravity and ſelf-importance. We are ſoon reminded, however, of the throes of the mountain in the fable, by the appearance of a *mouſe*, in a ſtring of the moſt trivial and vulgar axioms that inſipidity could deviſe; looſely, and in fact fallaciouſly, exhibited. A paſſage, which contains the material objection to the Jewiſh ſcriptures, not urged now for the firſt time by *Thomas Paine*, from whoſe partial information nothing *new* muſt be expected; but long ago and repeatedly advanced by every opponent of revelation, is ſoon preſented to our notice: and no wonder; for the difficulty contained in it is of primary concern, and has obtruded itſelf at all times, beyond controverſy, upon every reader of the

rect in proportion to the firmneſs of it's deciſion; but I freely acknowledge, it is inconceivable to me, how any mind, that is warmed by the fainteſt ſpark of patriotiſm, or tinctured with the ſlighteſt dye of honour, can contribute to the credit of ſuch a publication, by his tranſcendant powers, without perceiving the juſt ſuſpicions of ſincerity, inevitably excited by ſuch an indubitable deſertion of his principles, in the ſupport of deſpotiſm, venality, and ignorance.

Bible, whether enemy or friend, whether infidel or believer. Thus then the charge is enforced by our redoubtable antagoniſt, and in a turbulence of phraſe, and a ſpirit of defiance, that proclaim him, in his own opinion at leaſt, the moſt tremendous warrior yet accoutered by infidelity for the demolition of revealed religion; whereas, if the appeal be made from the blind perſuaſions of admiring egotiſm to the calm tribunal of rigorous neutrality, the *Julians* and *Bolingbrokes* of ancient and modern times, in all literary accompliſhment, are to the preſent champion, like meridian ſuns to the faint glimmerings of the nightly taper.

"There are matters in that book, ſaid to be done by *the expreſs* "*command* of God, that are as ſhocking to humanity, and to "every idea we have of moral juſtice, as any thing done by Ro- "beſpierre, by Carrier, by Joſeph le Bon, in France; by the "Engliſh government, in the Eaſt Indies; or by any other aſ- "ſaſſin in modern times. When we read in the books aſcribed "to Moſes, Joſhua, &c. that they (the Iſraelites) came by "ſtealth upon whole nations of people, who, as the hiſtory itſelf "ſhews, had given them no offence; *that they put all thoſe na-* "*tions to the ſword; that they ſpared neither age nor infancy; that* "*they utterly deſtroyed men, women, and children; that they left not* "*a ſoul to breathe;** expreſſions that are repeated over and over "again in thoſe books, and that too with exulting ferocity: are "we ſure theſe things are facts? are we ſure that the Creator of "man commiſſioned theſe things to be done? are we ſure that "the books that tell us ſo, were written by his authority?

"It is not the antiquity of a tale, that is any evidence of it's "truth; on the contrary, it is a ſymptom of it's being fabulous; "for the more ancient any hiſtory pretends to be, the more it has "the reſemblance of a fable. The origin of every nation is buried "in fabulous tradition, and that of the Jews is as much to be "ſuſpected as any other. To charge the commiſſion of acts "upon the Almighty, which in their own nature, and by every "rule of moral juſtice, are crimes, as all aſſaſſination is, and "more

* Judges, chap. x. and xi.

"more eſpecially the aſſaſſination of infants, is matter of ſerious "concern. The Bible tells us, that thoſe aſſaſſinations were "done by the *expreſs command of God*. To believe therefore the "Bible to be true, we muſt *unbelieve* all our belief in the moral "juſtice of God; for wherein could crying or ſmiling infants of- "fend? And to read the Bible without horror, we muſt undo "every thing that is tender, ſympathiſing, and benevolent in the "heart of man. Speaking for myſelf, if I had no other evidence "that the Bible is fabulous, than the ſacrifice I muſt make to "believe it to be true, that alone would be ſufficient to determine "my choice."

Now, it muſt not be diſſembled, queſtions of momentous import are ultimately involved in this bold and indigeſted accuſation. How far I myſelf ſhall be able to return an anſwer, ſatisfactory to the demands of a judicious and diſintereſted examiner, muſt be ſubmitted to his own free judgment. I muſt premiſe, however, that the cauſe ſhould in all equity be ſeparated from it's advocate; and wiſh the reader to remember at every ſtep, that profounder learning and more compaſs of abilities might ſucceed, where I ſhall fail. In the mean while, I take this taſk upon me, from a wiſh to promote and eſtabliſh truth, and for the gratification and comfort of diſpaſſionate humility; not from a confidence of ſuperior endowments; not from an apprehenſion of the dangerous effects of *Thomas Paine*'s effuſions on the conſiderate and well-informed; nor from a vain expectation of the ſlighteſt impreſſion on his incorrigible mind. He demonſtrates himſelf, from the unvarying tenour of his vociferations and abuſe, to be a headſtrong ſcioliſt; one, who has neither learning enough to know when he is confuted, nor ingenuous candour to acknowledge the confutation.

1. *Thomas Paine*, as various paſſages evince, profeſſes his belief in an Almighty Creator and Governor of the world. Now upon that ſyſtem, all the powers and faculties of man are the workmanſhip of the Divinity, and all the operations of all human agents are at his diſpoſal, and under his controul. As this per-

ſuaſion ſeems an immediate and unavoidable deduction from the premiſes, and muſt force itſelf on the ſimpleſt underſtanding, ſo is it conſonant to the ſentiment and language of the Jewiſh prophet,* "I am the Lord, and there is none elſe: I form the light, and create darkneſs: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all theſe things." We ſee accordingly, that ſimilar exceſſes to thoſe ſpecified in the quotation juſt adduced, have been committed through every age of the world to our times, which certainly are by no means exempt from the guilt of theſe enormities. But all this violation of humanity and juſtice has taken place under the divine adminiſtration of the human race. So far then it is undeniable, I think, that deiſm, judaiſm, and chriſtianity repoſe on the ſame foundation; and as far as this principle has it's application, natural and revealed religion muſt ſtand or fall together. But what will our boiſterous and raſh adventurer reply to the preſent argument? Why, to ſave himſelf the trouble of refutation, it's imbecillity or it's force will be made no object of his conſideration: he will have recourſe to the compendious alternative of *falſhood;* and tell us gravely, that a *pious prieſt* is the father of this objection to his charge; as if the *man* were to be regarded, and not his *reaſons!* Our controverſialiſt has learned a very bad leſſon from his enemies in England, againſt whom I once endeavoured to defend him.† They truly thought themſelves excuſed from an attention to his political attacks on the corruptions of their ſyſtem, becauſe he was once a *ſtay-maker.* And *Thomas Paine*, in his turn, we ſee, is converting all his anſwerers into *ſtay-makers* too!

I can deſcry, however, no ſecurity for his creed, from the annoyance of the argument here ſtated, but in the fortreſſes of atheiſm; where alone it's operations cannot reach him, and in which there is but too much reaſon to apprehend, that one of his diſingenuous and conceited humour will ſoon entrench himſelf.

2. It was the profeſſed object of the Moſaical inſtitution, to preſerve entire and uncorrupted the worſhip of one God only, in a world

* Iſaiah xlv. 6, 7.

† See my Evidences of Chriſtianity, page 80, 2d edition.

a world over-run with wild idolatry, and infected by moſt ſanguinary and flagitious ſuperſtitions, engrafted on that corrupting principle. It is highly probable, from hiſtoric teſtimony, and the condition of other nations, that we are ſolely indebted at this day for our purer apprehenſions of the Supreme Being, to the ſeaſonable and permanent interference of the Moſaic law; a law, which not only prevented the total uſurpations of idolatry, by the reſerve of an entire and numerous nation from her tyranny, but by the diffuſion of it's converting influence through the vaſt regions of the Eaſt, connected with the Jews in their perpetual and extended migrations, partly ſpontaneous, and partly the reſult of conqueſt. Upon this purpoſe, of which *Thomas Paine* has not yet demonſtrated the inefficacy or the folly, a queſtion will ariſe, how far the deſtruction of a ſmall portion of mankind, the inhabitants of a few cities, towns, or villages in Paleſtine, where theſe religious impieties were moſt prevalent, might be calculated to effectuate the diſſemination and eſtabliſhment of this grand truth, reſpecting the Divinity; and how far ſuch a mean of effecting it be reconcileable to juſt conceptions of the divine government.

Now, if we reflect on the power of habit, and the durable conſequences of educational profeſſion; and that error, if not completely eradicated in the firſt inſtance, will ſoon ſhoot up afreſh, and ſpread itſelf to an unlimited extent from a ſingle fibre; the ſuperior expediency of ſuch a proceſs, for the completion of the end in view, is intuitively manifeſt: all our difficulty conſiſts in bringing ſuch a diſcipline into a conformity with the acknowledged attributes of God, and the immutable laws of humanity and juſtice.

With relation to the former point, I mean the aſpect of this propoſition on God himſelf, it will ſcarcely be pretended, I ſuppoſe, that more cruelty is diſplayed in cutting off women and children (to put an extreme caſe) by the ſummary execution of the ſword, than in deſtroying them, as we ſee them perpetually deſtroyed, by earthquakes, peſtilences, and inundations; or by

the lingering operation of painful diſeaſes and loathſome ſores. It is equally the will and diſpenſation of omnipotence in either inſtance; and our acquieſcence in the diſcipline, muſt proceed upon the ſame principle in both caſes, namely, the inability of an ignorant ſhort-ſighted tranſitory being, to comprehend, from an inſpection of a few parts, the multitudinous operations, and the unbounded fabric of the celeſtial machine. With much more reaſon might we expect a complete theory of geographical menſuration for the terraqueous globe from the perambulations of a *mite*, or demand from a *gnat* a correct delineation of the cometary ſyſtem.

On the other hand, it muſt be conceded, that this remedy of extirpation was calculated to engender diſpoſitions of ferocity in thoſe commiſſioned with an actual adminiſtration of it; but our antipathies may be accommodated to this inferior difficulty, if I miſtake not, by various conſiderations. The Jews, though in numerous particulars of civilization much advanced beyond their neighbours and contemporaries, were little better than barbarians in the days of Joſhua. The refining doctrines of their ſyſtem (for many truths were contained in it) operated but ſlowly, as was to be expected, on the dull ſenſations of ſuch a wayward race; and the ſyſtem itſelf was in it's deſign but introductory to another much more perfect, and accordingly, as ſuch, was adapted to the exigencies of a rude tribe in the infancy of it's emergence from barbarity. But the general tendency of ſuch ſummary diſcipline on their idolatrous enemies, to render the manners of the executioners malignant and ferocious, could not fail to be materially counteracted by a contemplation of the ſpecific object in view, and would naturally confine their animoſities to the ſubject of idolatry alone. The progreſs from unrelenting fierceneſs againſt idolaters, ſtained with the blood of human ſacrifices, to a general diſpoſition of cruelty to all mankind, might hence be trivial, and almoſt evaneſcent; as we may ſafely pronounce from obvious occurrences in common life. We ſhould paſs a very injurious judgment upon the humanity of a ſurgeon, if we ſuppoſed him leſs ſuſceptible of ſympathetic tenderneſs, or more prone to acts of mutila-

mutilation, from the indiſpenſable offices of his profeſſion. The grand preſervative from depravation in this caſe is the *ſalutary* end in view, and the inſeparable connection of the temporary ſufferings of individuals with general and laſting benefit to the whole community of mankind.

3. It has always been deemed by me (whether juſtly, or not, let the reader ſay) a reaſonable poſtulatum, that ſome qualifications and ſoftenings in the caſe of many relations and occurrences in the Bible hiſtory may be very properly applied, without any danger to the main fabric of revelation, upon the ground of exaggeration from national vanity, and the pride of individuals. Surely our adverſaries, who are ſtudious of repreſenting the Iſraelites as ſomething leſs than men, will not deny them the concomitant failings of mortality. We may preſume, therefore, upon ſome enlargement on the part of the narrator in the ſplendor of their victories, and the number of the ſlain, and the extent of their deſolations. The Jews were, as I have before obſerved, but a few degrees removed in that age from the manners of barbarians; and we find it a characteriſtic property of barbariſm to delight in war, and blood, and battles; in which reſpects, my countrymen of Great Britain, with all their religious eſtabliſhment, and all their civilized arts, are, to the full, as arrant barbarians as the butchering troops of Joſhua; and, where he deſtroyed his hundreds, Britain has ſlaughtered by ſlavery, by famine, and by the ſword, her thouſands, and tens of thouſands.

Beſides, the Iſraelites, in conſequence of the theocratical polity, under which we will ſuppoſe them to have lived, till our credulity ſhall be diſabuſed by more able reaſoners than *Thomas Paine*, were accuſtomed in every inſtance, and on all occaſions, to acknowledge the immediate agency of God; and eſteemed themſelves under the guidance of his arm, through every circumſtance of their lives. From this favourite apprehenſion, too generally extended, and too partially indulged, it is the practice of their hiſtorians to ſpeak of every tranſaction as preſcribed by the expreſs injunc-

tions

tions of Jehovah; when we are under no neceſſity, I think, of ſuppoſing a ſpecific and actual interference in the caſe; but may very rationally, and in conformity to the rules of accepted interpretation, have recourſe, for a ſolution, to that predominant and univerſal perſuaſion, from their infancy, of the peculiar ſuperintendance of Jehovah, not only over the political welfare of their ſtate, but the private concerns of individuals.

4. Laſtly, It is a point worthy of inveſtigation, how far Joſhua, and his fellow-ſoldiers, in compliance with the ferocious character of the times, and the ſanguinary propenſities of military men, may actually have exceeded their commiſſion, and indulged themſelves in unauthorized acts of murder, rapine, and devaſtation.

It is ſaid indeed,* that Joſhua and his men "ſmote all the ſouls with the edge of the ſword, utterly deſtroying them; that there was not any left to breathe; and he burned Hazor with fire. And all the cities of thoſe kings, and all the kings of them did Joſhua take, and ſmote them with the edge of the ſword; and he utterly deſtroyed them, as Moſes the ſervant of the Lord commanded." This command of Moſes may be read in Deuteronomy xx. 16, 17; vii. 16. But, if we may be allowed that method of ſolving difficulties, that ariſes from ſeeming contradictions in our author; a method accepted in the caſe of other writers, as legitimate and unexceptionable; we ſhall not be authorized, perhaps, to interpret the direction of Moſes beyond a *total expulſion* of the original inhabitants from the ſtations intended for the occupation of the Iſraelites; and a *deſtruction*, as it were, of their reſidence among their conquerors. In behalf of this latitude of explanation, I obſerve, that in Numbers xxxiii. 52—56, we find the command of Moſes limited to thoſe points only; the driving them from their habitations, and annihilating their temples, groves, and other appendages and implements of idolatrous devotion. The capital object ſeems to have been, a ſecurity from ſocial intermixture with

* Joſhua xi. 11, 12.

with the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan. This point was to be accompliſhed, it appears, at all events; but, whether the barbarous extermination of men, women, and children, by the ſword, be not imputable to the heated fury of the ſoldiery, and the ſanguinary diſpoſition of an uncivilized age, rather than to the ſpirit of the Jewiſh ſyſtem, and the ferocious requiſitions of their lawgiver, is a dilemma now ſubmitted to the diſintereſted deciſion of the reader.

Upon the firſt quotation, therefore, from *Thomas Paine*, I have only to remind the reader, that if all, or any of the ſeveral obſervations juſt ſtated, have the weight of rational probability, the main body of our adverſary's forces is at once, either directly, or by inference, effectually diſcomfited; and nothing more remains upon this leading queſtion, but to knock on the head a few ſtraggling banditti of no ſignificance, as they come caſually in our way. For, in general, his curſory remarks, and his occaſional ſallies of humour, are unconnected with the eſſential merits of the ſubject; and come attended with too little ſemblance of information and diſintereſted conſideration of the queſtion, to challenge a ſerious regard. Our citizen may hug himſelf in the potency of his reaſoning, and the poignancy of his wit; but readers of judgment, ſolidity, and ſerioufneſs, will condemn his buffoonery as unſeaſonable; will ſcout his arguments as frivolous; explode his knowledge as vulgar and contemptible. Readers of this claſs, I ſay, to borrow the beautiful compariſon of a writer unrivalled for comprehenſion of thought, and energy of diction, diſtinguiſh the *venom* of the *ſhaft* from the *vigour* of the *bow*.

"The advocates of the Bible, in their anſwers to the former "part of the *Age of Reaſon*, undertake to ſay, and they put ſome "ſtreſs thereon, that the authenticity of the Bible is as well "eſtabliſhed, as that of any other ancient book: as if our belief "of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other."

This ſaid *Thomas Paine*, gentle reader, ſhews himſelf but a

puzzle-pated fellow; an inevitable conſequence of ruſhing from his ſphere into regions not adapted to his faculties and movements; from the groſs atmoſphere of common topics, into the fine æther of theological diſquiſition. What! has our citizen then never heard of the well-drawn argument from *analogy?* Surely, ſurely, there is no fallacy in the caſe before us! If inquirers have agreed, upon the eſtabliſhed rules of evidence, that *one* book has all the marks of authenticity upon it, which reſult from the circumſtances of human teſtimony; and thus acquires the character of extreme *probability* in it's favour, beyond which, there can be no advancement towards certainty, from the very nature of the ſubject; ſhall not *another* book, which is here ſuppoſed to come attended with equal corroboration, be equally entitled to our acceptance? To combat this inference from analogy, is abſolute inconſiſtency; and only imputable to incorrigible ſtupidity, or the hardineſs of wilful contradiction. And ſhall a man, who can talk ſuch nonſenſe with infinite complacency, and enforce it by an intemperate infuſion of inſolence, conceit, and contumely, in all it's forms, be permitted to paſs off, not only with impunity, but with applauſe and triumph? Nay, verily: but he ſhould be gibbeted on the page of immortality, if ſuch chaſtiſement were in my power, as a warning for audacious blockheads, to all future generations.

"I know, however, but one ancient book that authoritatively "challenges univerſal conſent and belief; and that is *Euclid's* "*Elements of Geometry;* and the reaſon is, becauſe it is a book "of ſelf-evident demonſtration, entirely independent of it's "author, and of every thing relating to time, place, and cir-"cumſtance."

Upon reading ſuch choice paſſages as theſe, (of which there is no ſcarcity in *Thomas Paine*'s Age of Reaſon; and a few of which, to ſave my own time, and the reader's patience, muſt ſerve for a ſpecimen of the reſt) one is at a loſs, whether moſt to deſpiſe the inſolence of preſumption, or to pity the imbecillity of

of ignorance. What writer, before our marvellous adventurer, was ever ſo eſtranged from the forms and uſages of argumentative inveſtigation, as to parallel *ſcientific demonſtration* with *hiſtoric teſtimony?* And to what purpoſe ſuch a ſtrange compariſon, unleſs the votaries of revelation had urged on mankind a claim of aſſent to the Bible hiſtory, as to a propoſition of mathematical aſcertainment? But our author ſhews himſelf, by the very terms of his ſtatement, to know as little of Euclid, as he knows of the principles of legitimate ratiocination: and at this moment, I will venture to aſſert, can prove, as deciſively, two ſides of a rectilinear triangle to be greater than the third, as we are able to *demonſtrate ſcientifically* the authenticity of the Moſaic hiſtory. What ſmatterer in Euclid, but can inform our wiſe-acre, that the theorem upon parallel lines, for inſtance, in the firſt book of Elements, a theorem of ſuch prime importance, and extenſive application, is, to this day, a ſubject of diſpute with the very beſt geometers? But I feel aſhamed to argue with ſuch a bold pretender to every ſpecies of learning, and poſſeſſed of none; and our cauſe is diſgraced by the meanneſs and impotency of it's opponent. If we muſt periſh, let us periſh by the hands of ſome noble adverſary, and not by vermin!

"Nobody," ſays our author,* "believes the Trojan ſtory, as "related by Homer, to be true."

For my part, I am unable to diſcover, upon what excuſable pretence, a man, who cannot read a word of Homer, and knows juſt nothing of the circumſtances of his work, preſumes to believe, or diſbelieve any thing about him; or to utter a ſingle word connected with the ſubject: but the flippancy of ſome people is aſtoniſhing indeed; and their effrontery without limits. *Thomas Paine*, that profound ſcholar! that accurate antiquary! that painful traveller! that candid judge! ſuppoſes, that there is no truth in the Trojan ſtory! Now, on the contrary, thoſe who are moſt converſant with Homer, and with the ancient

* Page 4.

ancient commentators and geographers that have illuſtrated his poem, (and ſuch only can be deemed competent judges of the queſtion) will acknowledge, that there is much reaſon to believe, a thing in itſelf alſo previouſly probable, very few of the merely hiſtorical events in the *Iliad* to be purely fabulous; and that the accuracy of Homer's information, upon the topics of national manners, chronology, perſonal, and general hiſtory, appears more and more commendable, in proportion to our own acquaintance with the ſubject, by a more minute inveſtigation of ancient authors, and the ocular obſervations of modern travellers. The ſame remark, as we paſs, is juſtly applicable to the Bible alſo. The profane hiſtories, in the direct ratio of their antiquity, and their approximation to the times of the ſcriptural tranſactions, give their evidence more largely and explicitly in favour of the ſacred volumes; ſo as to furniſh juſt reaſon for expecting a much greater acceſſion of evidence in their behalf, if Grecian hiſtory had ſooner flouriſhed, or the literary monuments of neighbouring nations, the Babylonians eſpecially, and Phœnicians, had eſcaped to us through the ravages of time and barbariſm. We ſee, therefore, however trivial and incidental the topic be, that *Thomas Paine* cannot wander from the contracted circle of his own ſcanty acquirements, without expoſing himſelf to ſuch abſurd and inexcuſable errors, as muſt excite againſt him the contempt and laughter of mankind.

"As to the ancient hiſtorians, from Herodotus to Tacitus, "we credit them as far as they relate things probable and credi- "ble, and no further; for if we do, we muſt believe the two "miracles which Tacitus relates were performed by Veſpaſian, "that of curing a lame man, and a blind man, in juſt the ſame "manner as the ſame things are told of Jeſus Chriſt by his "hiſtorians."

This point of Veſpaſian has been ſo often mentioned, and ſo often refuted, that I ſhall be ſcarcely deemed pardonable for ſtopping to touch upon it.

Inepta

Inepta hæc esse nos quæ facimus sentio:
Verum quid facias? ut homo est, ita morem geras.

But Vespasian exhibited no such proofs of wisdom and purity in his own character, as Jesus of Nazareth: he made no pretensions to the office of a teacher of religion, with a divine commission; so that his supposed miracles are not rendered probable, in the first instance, by connection with a long series of important transactions, independently attested, and still vigorous among mankind in extensive and momentous consequences,* not otherwise susceptible of explanation. Nor do I remember, that the feats of Vespasian are recorded by any eye-witness of their performance; they are, therefore, no better than a hearsay story. And who does not know what idolatrous adulation was paid by all ranks of men, even by scholars and philosophers themselves, to the Roman emperors? And this, added to their unlimited power of reward and punishment over all their subjects, would of itself throw a suspicion on such relations, not at all applicable in a single circumstance to the miracles of Christ, and the testimony of his apostles.

"We must also believe the miracle cited by Josephus, that of "the sea of Pamphilia opening to let Alexander and his army "pass, as is related of the Red Sea in Exodus. These miracles "are quite as well authenticated as the Bible miracles, and yet "we do not believe them."

Now admitting this fact to have been uniformly related by all the historians of Alexander's life, and ultimately referable to the authority of ocular attestation; I should either presume, without cogent and independent inducements to a supposition of supernatural agency, that some unusual concurrence of events had made a passage easy at that juncture, over a straight generally impassible; and that thus a particular and seasonable coincidence had been eagerly exalted (a process, neither incredible nor uncommon)

* ———— ταδ' αιει
Ζωντα περιποταται. Sophocles.

uncommon) into a providential interference; or that theſe hiſtorians, who were ſtrangers to the peculiar circumſtances of that country, had haſtily put the conſtruction of a miraculous event on a phenomenon, not ſingular to the inhabitants of thoſe regions, and readily ſuſceptible of explanation upon natural and eaſy principles. Some of our Engliſh hiſtorians aſſert, for example, that the Danes came up in their ſhips as far as Hertford; and, in confirmation of this account, anchors have been digged up in the vale through which thoſe ravagers muſt have paſſed, and which is not far from the ſpot where I now am writing. Subſequent embankments of the Thames, and other operations of the ſame tendency, have reſtrained the ſea in later periods from this tract of ground, clothed in our days with verdure and fertility. So that without ſome collateral preſumptions, we ſhould feel ourſelves ſtrongly inclined to call this point of hiſtory in queſtion, as a circumſtance, to borrow *Thomas Paine*'s indefinite expreſſion, *naturally incredible*. But it happens in this miracle of Joſephus moſt unfortunately for our ſwaggering polemic, (who believes with true ſceptical credulity, at ſecond-hand, more than any man of ſenſe I have yet debated with, and, like a thief, ſteals every thing, bad or good, on which he can lay his hands, and ſuppoſes calculated for his purpoſe): it is unfortunate, I ſay, for *Thomas Paine*'s example, that *Strabo*,* whoſe diſcretion, diſcernment, good ſenſe, learning, and fidelity, with every other recommendation of a reſpectable hiſtorian and geographer, have, I believe, never been diſputed; Strabo, I ſay, ſo far from aggrandiſing this paſſage of Alexander into a mighty miracle, aſſerts, that this conqueror croſt the ſea at a juncture of unneceſſary difficulty and danger, with the water flowing to the arm-pits of his ſoldiers; when, if he had been willing to wait a little, he might have gone over dry-ſhod!

And is not *Thomas Paine* now a fine fellow for a point of learning and antiquity! Is he not, as an accurate and judicious narrator

* Book xiv. p. 982, ed. Amſt.

narrator of hiſtorical reports, a redoubtable adverſary to encounter the evidences of revelation! In my opinion, language is too feeble to characteriſe, in terms of ſufficient aggravation, ſuch unprincipled and deteſtable audacity.

One who is bold enough, with an air of ineffable conceit, to inſult and contradict the majority of thinking men, on points of the higheſt moment, becomes odious if he errs in a ſingle inſtance of his cenſure. The man, that finds fault, is not allowed to be wrong.

"Having premiſed thoſe things, I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible; and I begin with what are called the five books of Moſes, *Geneſis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. My intention is to ſhew, that thoſe books are ſpurious, and that Moſes is not the author of them; and ſtill further, that they were not written in the time of Moſes, nor till ſeveral hundred years afterwards; that they are no other than an attempted hiſtory of the life of Moſes, and of the times in which he is ſaid to have lived, and alſo of the times prior thereto, written by ſome very ignorant and ſtupid pretenders to authorſhip, ſeveral hundred years after the death of Moſes; as men now write hiſtories of things that happened, or are ſuppoſed to have happened, ſeveral hundred, or ſeveral thouſand years ago."*

For a ſpecimen of boiſterous pretenſions and ſmall performances, commend me to this *Thomas Paine!* Inſtead of an illiterate mountebank, acquainted with no language but his own, and whoſe knowledge of authors is circumſcribed by a few writers even in that language; you would conclude from the pomp and ceremony of his phraſeology, I PROCEED, and I BEGIN, and MY INTENTION, &c. that a moſt profound ſcholar, who had devoted his life to hiſtorical and antiquarian reſearches, was preparing to divulge with magiſterial ſolemnity ſome grand diſcoveries, that have eluded the diligence and ſagacity of all the learned, from his profeſſional chair. But let not the modeſt reader be alarmed; we ſhall preſently find, when the proofs of

* Page 5.

theſe loud promiſes are adduced, that our ſcribbler has taken care to ſecure himſelf a very reſpectable elevation, on the liſt of thoſe, whom he placidly ſtiles "very ignorant and ſtupid pretenders to authorſhip." He brags loudly and fiercely through the whole of his performance; but, I preſume, the reader is already tolerably well aware, what ſort of an animal has covered himſelf up in a lion's ſkin.

"The evidence that I ſhall produce in this caſe is from the "books themſelves; and I will confine myſelf to this evidence "only. Were I to refer for proofs to any of the ancient "authors, whom the advocates of the Bible call profane au- "thors, they would controvert that authority, as I controvert "their's: I will therefore meet them on their own ground, "and oppoſe them with their own weapon, the Bible."*

Modeſt and candid creature! He will confine himſelf, then, to the evidence of the books themſelves! But is he acquainted with any other? Has he a fund, from which he can draw a ſingle particle of independent knowledge, the reſult I mean of his own ſtudies and meditations; which alone could qualify him to conſider the hiſtorical and chronological evidences of the ſacred writings? Ignorance, reſulting from want of opportunities, is no diſhonour to any man; and in the preſent depravity of human governments, inattentive to general happineſs and intellectual improvement, is alas! the lot of many. But ignorance, under the aſſumed garb of ſelf-ſufficient knowledge, and accompanied by a portion of dictatorial confidence, and unbluſhing poſitivity, which no knowledge could have juſtified, is indeed the conſummation of diſgrace. What ſhould we think of *Booby-clod* the ploughman, undertaking to ſubvert the reigning ſyſtem of mathematical philoſophy, and gravely premiſing to his expecting readers, "I SHALL NOT meddle with the geometrical part of this argument, but ſhall confute that extravagant notion of the revolutions of planets, gravitating to a central ſun, by meeting the geometer and the optician on their own ground, and oppoſing them with their own weapon, the eye. Do we not *ſee* the ſun and moon

* Pages 5 and 6.

moon riſe and ſet daily? and what evidence is equal to the evidence of our ſenſes?"

"In the firſt place, there is no affirmative evidence that Moſes "is the author of thoſe books; and that he is the author, is "altogether an unfounded opinion got abroad, nobody knows "how." *

Now I feel no difficulty in maintaining, that it is a point perfectly immaterial, whether Moſes be the author of thoſe books, or no; not that *Thomas Paine*, in the mean while, is at all able to prove any thing in oppoſition to what judicious writers have advanced on the ſubject. The citizen indeed is ſo much beyond his latitude in theſe inquiries, that the ſtrongeſt preſumption muſt ariſe before-hand of a more ample conviction accruing to the reader upon the truth of every propoſition, which *Thomas Paine* undertakes to controvert and expoſe. If any reader have patience to wade through ſuch a ſink of futility, ſuch a bog of vague, ſophiſtical, and unſubſtantiated declamation, (and I am ſure it has been a very painful trial to myſelf) he will have in conſcience nothing more to do than turn his own battery upon this pretender; and in anſwer to all his ſuppoſitions, gravely play upon him his emphatical and important maxim, "SUPPOSITION PROVES NOTHING."

It will ſave however much trouble to the reader, and ſuperſede at once a circumſtantial refutation of our author's rhodomontade impertinences in detail, to exhibit a brief ſtatement of the evidence for the Jewiſh revelation, though in a way perhaps unintelligible, or at leaſt unpalatable, to *Thomas Paine*, and writers of his deſcription, who have ſuch compendious ways of arriving at truth; and ways which none but themſelves are qualified to travel with ſucceſs. From ſuch a ſtatement, though inadequately exhibited, and worthy of far ſuperior accompliſhments to mine, the impartial examiner will form a judgment how pertinent is our noiſy coxcomb's objection concerning the proper author of theſe books, and whether all the diſorderly operations of his pen on this point

* Page 6.

richly merit the fate which befel the tragedy of Ajax, written by Auguſtus, the fate *of falling on the ſponge.*

A numerous race of men during a period of *three thouſand three hundred years*, amidſt the revolutions of empires, and the viciſſitudes of time, during a tranſient ſun-ſhine of national proſperity, and a long ſtorm of exile, poverty, and perſecution, have adhered with unſhaken ſtedfaſtneſs to a ſyſtem of religious polity, which they pretend was delivered to their legiſlator in the days of their forefathers from the Divinity himſelf. The notoriety and renown of this people with the celebrated nations of antiquity does not depend for credibility on the ſolitary evidence of their own annals, but is atteſted by a long ſeries of ancient writers high in reputation, neither connected with their religion, nor friendly to their race. Many of theſe curious and ſtriking teſtimonies, whoſe entire exiſtence has been long loſt in the darkneſs of oblivion, are now found only in the bodies of thoſe works, which are indeed devoted to the cauſe of revelation; but whoſe fidelity is aſſured, not only by the acknowledged ſurviyal of the writings under contemplation, at the time when theſe extracts were exhibited in confirmation of the points in queſtion, but is moſt ſatisfactorily aſcertained by the accuracy of thoſe quotations, preſerved in the ſame repoſitories, from authors ſtill in being, and become thereby ſtanding vouchers for the general ſincerity of theſe advocates of revealed truth. The perſeverance of ſuch a hoſt of people to a ſyſtem of faith, with inſeparable aſſociation, under ſuch circumſtances, and for ſuch duration, is a fact unparallelled in the hiſtory of the human race; and as it is perfectly unaccountable, I truſt, by any wit of man, upon any principles of analogy, philoſophy, or tradition, without ſome original authentication proportionate to ſuch a conſequence, and therefore it ſhould ſeem an authentication from divine interference; this union and perſeverance may be reaſonably regarded as an earneſt of ſome important diſpenſation in reſerve for the conſolidation of this people into one united body: a conſolidation rendered practicable at any time, by the moſt extraordinary

preſervation

preſervation of the ſame cuſtoms, the ſame detachment from extraneous connection, and the tranſmiſſion of the ſame language. This ſubject is in truth pregnant with curioſity and wonder. Should you ſay, (for what will you not ſay?) that this pertinacity in their ſuperſtitions is the mere reſult of early education and rooted prejudice, without any reſpect to a providential economy, in their former aggregation, and their future diſpoſal; I would aſk, where thoſe ten tribes of Iſrael, who had imbibed the ſame prejudices of education, are exiſting at this day? *They* are no more known: though abundant in number above the choſen tribes, they are long ſince diſſolved and loſt in the vaſt ocean of mankind; whilſt this ſlender rivulet, conducted by the hand of God, has tranſmitted, like the fabled river of poetical antiquity, a pure and unmingled current, through the ſtream of time, and the torrent of revolutions, to the preſent age.

Their book of laws (to ſay nothing of other peculiarities and excellencies, which, in connection with their antiquity, and the relative civilization of contemporary nations, are conſiderations of the firſt importance) is by far the moſt ancient ſpecimen of alphabetical writing in the world; a fact in itſelf of extraordinary moment, and a moſt intereſting ſubject of philoſophical inquiry. This law exiſted among theſe people not much leſs than a *thouſand* years before written characters were introduced to the moſt poliſhed and renowned nation of ancient times; and thoſe characters were undoubtedly, at their original importation into Greece, no other than the characters employed by this very people. Nay, there is every reaſon, from exiſting evidences, to conclude, that alphabetical writing, as now practiſed through the univerſe, had it's ſource with this inſulated tribe; and not a ſhadow of argument, that I have been able to deſcry, has been alledged, whereby this unrivalled diſcovery can be vindicated to any other nation. And ſure I am, that this ſtupendous artifice of alphabetical characters infinitely tranſcends the ſublimeſt powers of ſagacity merely human.

Finally, the purity of preſervation, in which this collection of theological inſtitutes has deſcended to our times, is aſcertained not only from the ſcrupulous collation of numerous copies of very high antiquity, but from the diſcovery of the Samaritan Pentateuch, in the laſt century; which brought to light the ſame ſyſtem of laws, in their primæval characters, preſerved by a ſmall tribe, the tenants of their ancient territories in Samaria, at perpetual enmity with the Jews, and therefore a ſtronger corroboration of the mutual integrity of theſe records, from ſuch a peculiar correſpondence.

This is a ſlight and inadequate ſketch of the ſurprizing condition of the Jewiſh people, and the moſt unprecedented circumſtances of their religious and political conſtitution. And I have only to lament the inefficacy of my capacity and acquirements to ſet the figure in a point of view ſuited to diſplay the boldneſs of it's features, the ſymmetry of it's ſhapes, and the amplitude of it's dimenſions; but my ſtrength is indeed altogether diſproportionate to my wiſhes on this occaſion.

"After telling that Moſes went to the top of Piſgah, (and it "does not appear from any account that he ever came down "again,) he tells us, that Moſes died *there* in the land of Moab, "and that *he* buried him in a valley in the land of Moab; but as "there is no antecedent to the pronoun *he*, there is no knowing "who the *he* was, that did bury him. If the writer meant that "*he* (God) buried him, how ſhould *he* (the writer) know it? or "why ſhould we (the readers) believe him? ſince we know not "who the writer was that tells us ſo, for certainly Moſes could "not himſelf tell where he was buried." *

Our citizen, well aware (for he is no fool neither) that he can make nothing out on theſe topics by ſolid and ſober reaſoning, expects to carry every thing before him by parade and puffing; by throwing the duſt of big-ſounding words, and contemptuous inſinuation, in the eyes of his readers. The laſt chapter of Deuteronomy would occaſion no difficulty to an interpreter

* Page 8.

preter of a common author, of a different deſcription; nor would any reader be at a loſs how to reconcile, with plauſibility, what appearance there may be of ſingularity on the face of *this* narrative, to the rules of rational criticiſm. I ſhould feel myſelf very much ſurprized indeed, if any man in his ſober ſenſes could ſuppoſe Moſes himſelf to be the writer of this chapter; but *Thomas Paine* finds a marvellous delight in exhibiting monſters of his own creative fancy, that he may have the tranſcendant honour of knocking them down with his ruſtic club. It is my private opinion, and this opinion ſeems rendered abſolutely neceſſary by that transfiguration on the mount recorded in the New Teſtament, that Moſes was tranſlated, as Enoch and Elias had been before him;* and this chapter of Deuteronomy ſhould be regarded only as a conjectural account, to the beſt of the writer's evidence and information, of the death and burial of their lawgiver. But if our bullying champion can find any amuſement in talking *about it, and about it*, and in bandying his own abſurd hypotheſes from one ſide to another, in all the wantonneſs of puerility and nonſenſe, let us not envy him the tranquil poſſeſſion of his enjoyments. He has reſolved to ſay ſomething, forſooth! at all events; and will hazard his underſtanding and his honeſty, rather than ſuppreſs his frantic viſions, and inſipid jocularities.

"I come now to ſpeak of the hiſtorical and chronological evi-
" dence. The chronology that I ſhall uſe is the Bible chrono-
" logy; for I mean not to go out of the Bible for evidence of any
" thing, but to make the Bible itſelf prove hiſtorically and chrono-
" logically that Moſes is not the author of the books aſcribed to
" him. It is therefore proper that I inform the reader, (ſuch an
" one, at leaſt, as may not have the opportunity of knowing it,)
" that in the larger Bibles, and alſo in ſome ſmaller ones, there is
" a ſeries of chronology printed in the margin of every page, for

* I have maintained this opinion ſome years ago, in my Commentary on St. Matthew.

" the purpoſe of ſhewing how long the hiſtorical matters ſtated in " each page happened, or are ſuppoſed to have happened, before " Chriſt, and conſequently the diſtance of time between one hiſto- " rical circumſtance and another." *

So now *Thomas Paine* is ſetting up, I warrant you! for a profoundly learned hiſtorian and chronologer all at once! and you begin to expect great things from his recondite lucubrations. But the crafty rogue, like the courtier in Horace,

Interdùm urbani parcentis viribus, atque
Extenuantis eas conſulto ;

only gives you a hint of the mighty purpoſes he has in view, and the treaſures of his erudition in reſerve, if he could but perſuade himſelf to bring them forwards ; and then damps your ardour, in the very criſis of eager expectation, all at once with an " I mean " not to go out of the Bible for evidence of any thing!" The more the pity, ſay I, for your own contemporaries, and all poſterity, that you will not condeſcend to let the ſun of your intellect ſhine out upon the world, for the illumination of us darkling mortals, who are compelled to grope for truth, amidſt the obſcure glimmerings of twilight, through long and intricate windings of uncertainty ; and to trace her, with laborious perſeverance, by the lamp of reaſon, and the gleams of knowledge, to her dark receſs!

But let us ſtop to inquire what is the grand diſcovery, after ſuch mighty denunciations of vengeance on the Bible and it's ſupporters, in words big with ſome wonderful and vaſt achievement? Why, truly, to prove, from a compariſon of Judges xviii. 27, with Geneſis xiv. 14, that Moſes was not the author of the latter book! This is a ſpecimen of *fumum ex fulgore*, of bringing ſmother out of flame, with a witneſs! The point itſelf, if proved, is of no intrinſic moment whatever: but, without looking around us for other ſolutions ſufficiently fair and probable, what an incomprehenſible dunce muſt that man be, who cannot reflect on ſo ſimple a probability, that *two* places might be called, as in a thouſand inſtances, by the ſame name? At leaſt, the writers of theſe

* Page 10.

theſe books will ſcarcely be thought deſtitute of common caution and rationality; but a blunder of this kind, if made out according to the ſtatement of our ſubtle reaſoner, without a poſſibility of qualification or evaſion, would ſtamp a writer the moſt egregious fool that ever exiſted among mankind, by ſhewing him to have engaged in a work, for which neither his ſenſe nor his honeſty were even tolerably competent. Whether ancient times were prolific in ſuch ſtupid beings as theſe, I will not venture to aſſert; but I am ſure our curioſity has not far to go in ſearch of ſuch an enormous dunce in our days, without meeting with ſucceſs. Let not *Thomas Paine* imagine, however, in any event, that the evidences of the Moſaic inſtitution, in all their dependencies and extent, can be ſet aſide by a word of *two* letters; and that word under the management of ſuch an adverſary as our preſent vain glorious and empty bluſterer.

——————dat inania verba,
Dat ſine mente ſonum.

For the reſt, if it ſhould be found neceſſary to allow that ſome interpolations, or ſome changes, have been made in the body of the Moſaic hiſtory, with an intention of greater perſpicuity, and clearer connection to the narrative, for the purpoſe of accommodation to poſterior circumſtances in the ſubſtitution of names or places, by altering the obſolete to the current denomination, I profeſs myſelf not ſagacious enough to diſcover the leaſt tendency to an abſolute invalidation of the narrative at large from ſuch uneſſential variations; unleſs facts themſelves, which appear abundantly corroborated, and both numerous and important, can be proved at the ſame time anachronous or falſe.

In my progreſs through this unutterably deſpicable performance, but of which it's parent is warped with ſuch an overweening fondneſs and admiration, that his head, in his own eſtimation, bruſhes the very ſtars of heaven in their courſes; it ſhall be my endeavour to ſelect from ſuch a crude farrago of impertinence and ſtupidity what obſervations may incidentally give riſe to ſtrictures ſuſceptible, as far as my attainments admit, of ſome

argument or information to the reader: for as to *arguments*, what occur in this *age of reaſon* can be compared to nothing more fitly, than to the fragments of a ſhip-wrecked veſſel floating on the ſurface of the immeaſurable ocean.

Apparent rari nantes in gurgite vaſto.

With reſpect to that truly ſanguinary tranſaction recorded in Numbers xxxi. 14—19; and quoted with boundleſs exultation by our author, in page 15, I have nothing to add in explanation or apology to the general remarks before ſuggeſted, and ſubmitted to the deciſion of our readers; except that our hypertragical declaimer, to whom truth and falſhood are alike indifferent, for the promotion of his wayward purpoſes, will be detected of miſrepreſentation in his charge of *debauchery*, by a compariſon of the paſſage in queſtion, with Judges xxi. 11; and he has told us more than once, that he does not deſign to expatiate, for evidence, into the wide province of univerſal literature, which he has, doubtleſs, traverſed with inquiſitive and ſucceſsful ſpeculation; but is contented, in the true ſpirit of meekneſs and moderation, to confine his impetuoſity of genius, and his vigour of erudition, to the narrow boundaries of the Bible only. This exemption, therefore, from univerſal extermination, was an act of benignity, as far as it extended, on purpoſe to incorporate the reſidue of theſe devoted people, ſtill uncontaminated, in an equal fellowſhip with the Jewiſh nation.

"In the 24th chapter, ver. 31, it is ſaid, "And Iſrael ſerved "the Lord all the days of Joſhua, and *all the days of the elders that* "*over-lived Joſhua.*" Now in the name of common ſenſe, can it "be Joſhua that relates what people had done after he was dead? "This account muſt not only have been written by ſome hiſtorian "that lived after Joſhua, but that lived alſo after the elders that "had out-lived Joſhua." *

After all that has been urged above on this topic, is it poſſible for any reader, not utterly eſtranged from every ſofter feeling of humanity, to peruſe ſuch a paſſage without a benevolent wiſh for the application of a cooling plaiſter, without loſs of time, to the

* Page 19.

the poor writer's pericranium? I heartily hope, that no dangers may ariſe to the community from his future operations, ſo as to iſſue in the deprivation of his liberty. *Certe furit!* and it became him at leaſt, if his intemperance of zeal, his pride of heart, and his inveteracy of prejudice, had not clouded his perſpicacity, and confuſed his perception, either to point out thoſe divines, who had aſcribed the paſſage under inſpection to the pen of Joſhua, or to demonſtrate the hazard to the intereſts of revelation, from ſuppoſing it the addition of ſome future penman, who digeſted and modelled theſe hiſtories. But what can be expected from an infuriate polemic, the pitiable victim of conceit and ignorance, who fumes and foams in an idle combat with the phantoms of his own diſordered imagination?

"This tale of the ſun ſtanding ſtill upon mount Gibeon, and "the moon in the valley of Ajalon, is one of thoſe fables that "detects itſelf. Such a circumſtance could not have happened "without being known all over the world. One half would have "wondered why the ſun did not riſe, and the other why it did "not ſet; and the tradition of it would be univerſal; whereas "there is not a nation in the world that knows any thing about "it. But why muſt the moon ſtand ſtill? What occaſion could "there be for moon-light in the day-time, and that too while the "ſun ſhined?" *

On the ſubject of this paragraph, it may recompenſe the time of the reader to be detained by a few remarks, that the courſe of my ſtudies have enabled me to lay before him. I believe no more than *Thomas Paine* believes, that the ſun and moon, either in the apparent or philoſophical acceptation of the phraſe, actually ſtood ſtill on this occaſion, at the command of Joſhua: and I entertain this belief, not from the greater difficulty attendant on ſuch a miracle, if required by a concurrence of important circumſtances, than what accompanies the conſideration of the original formation of theſe glorious luminaries by the eternal Architect, or a thouſand other perpetual exhibitions of inconceivable omnipotence; but becauſe there ſeems, to my apprehenſion at leaſt, no ſuf-

* Page 20.

ſufficient reaſon for ſuch ſupernatural appearance in this inſtance; and becauſe a rational explication appears practicable without ſo violent an hypotheſis. It is an excellent rule of the poet, and well worthy of perpetual regard in all ſcriptural interpretations, as well as ordinary criticiſm,

Nec deus interſit, niſi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.

———————Nor let a God appear,
Unleſs for buſineſs worthy of a God.

But let the paſſage itſelf be firſt fairly diſplayed for our contemplation. "Then ſpoke Joſhua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Iſrael; and he ſaid in the ſight of Iſrael, Sun! ſtand thou ſtill upon Gibeon; and thou, moon! in the valley of Ajalon.

"And the ſun ſtood ſtill, and the moon ſtayed, until the people had avenged themſelves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jaſhir? So the ſun ſtood ſtill in the midſt of heaven, and haſted not to go down about a whole day.

"And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Iſrael."

Now this book of Jaſhir is again mentioned in 2 Samuel i. 18, and may probably have been a collection of poetic ſongs, in celebration of the extraordinary atchievements of the Iſraelitiſh armies. The words before us are of a poetical complexion in the original language, as thoſe acquainted with the Hebrew will immediately acknowledge; and the detached manner, in which this paſſage is exhibited, neither interfering with the former nor the ſubſequent parts of the ſurrounding narrative, gives great countenance to the ſuppoſition of it's inſertion in later times from the book of Jaſhir, to adorn this feat of heroiſm. On ſuch an acceptation, therefore, this entire paſſage is nothing more than a ſublime exaggeration of an enthuſiaſtic poet indulging thoſe fervors of rapturous invention conceded to his art: and the beauty, propriety, and conformity of the imagery in this view is ſtrikingly apparent, not only from the cuſtomary aſcription

tion of all events by the Jews to the immediate operation of the Deity, but from a ſimilar effuſion of uncommmon magnificence in a Roman poet:*

Te propter gelidis Aquilo de monte procellis
Obruit adverſas acies, revolutaque tela
Vertit in auctores, et turbine repulit haſtas.
O! nimiùm dilecte Deo; cui fundit ab antris,
Æolus armatas hiemes; cui militat æther,
Et conjurati veniunt ad claſſica venti.

For thee the north from frozen mountains blows,
The whelming ſtores of winter on thy foes;
In mid career the furious lance arreſt,
And whirl retorted on it's owner's breaſt.
O! lov'd by heaven! for thee in icy ſhowers
The Lord of winds his wrath tempeſtuous pours:
Fierce in thy cauſe, conſpiring ſkies engage,
And wait thy clarion to ſtream forth their rage.

If we ſuppoſe now, which is a very venial poſtulatum, that the time of this battle coincided, or nearly ſo, with the ſummer ſolſtice, we ſhall diſcover a very probable ſource of ſuch an hyperbole to the poet's fancy; nay, this circumſtance would be adopted with no heſitation, and without much appearance of ſingularity even to modern readers, by a *hiſtorian* of thoſe countries, as by no means incongruous to the fervid imaginations, and ſublimer flights, of oriental genius and phraſeology. This ſuppoſition is much aſſiſted alſo by the words, *And the ſun haſted not to go down about a whole day;* which repreſent that luminary lingering as it were through the longer period of a ſummer's diurnal revolution, to ſecond the exertions and complete the victory of the purſuing armies of Jehovah. And certainly neither hiſtorians nor poets expect ſuch ſwelling fancies to be cramped down and crippled by the literal reſtraints of vulgar application. When Homer in his Iliad, to aggrandiſe the exploits and prow-

eſs

* Claudian, de tert. conſ. Honor. verſe 93.

eſs of his heroes, tells the reader by a particular addreſs in the midſt of action,

Ὡς οἱ μεν μαρναντο δεμας πυρὶ· ουδε κε Φαινης
Ουτε ποτ' ηελιον σοον εμμενεαι, ουτε σεληνην:

They fought like fire conglob'd: nor hadſt thou deem'd
The ſun exempt from danger, nor the moon:

he did not expect us, we may be ſure, to underſtand this ſublime effuſion in the rigour of verbal meaning. He was ſufficiently aware, that no man in his ſenſes could preſume from this aſſertion on any real hazard to the ſecurity of theſe etherial luminaries from the vain turmoils of ſuch reptiles on the earth.

A fiction of a ſimilar kind to that in Joſhua occurs alſo in the Odyſſey of the ſame poet; which, as it will ſerve to illuſtrate the paſſage of ſcripture, ſhall gratify the reader in Pope's beautiful tranſlation of it:

The raviſh'd queen with equal rapture glows,
Claſps her lov'd lord, and to his boſom grows.
Nor had they ended till the morning ray;
But Pallas backward held the riſing day,
The wheels of night retarding, to detain
The gay Aurora in the wavy main.

As to the mention of the *moon* in the paſſage of Joſhua, that is merely as a ſuitable appendage, and in a way ſufficiently conſonant and cuſtomary, to complete and dignify the imagery. Finally, if the reader will take the further trouble of conſulting the annotations of *Maſius* and *Grotius* in the *Critici Sacri*, on the paſſage, (by which it will appear, that the moſt learned and judicious interpreters, even of the Jews themſelves, conſidered no miracle to be diſplayed on this occaſion,) with a particular diſſertation on this point, at once ſolid and ingenious, in the firſt volume of the *Theological Repoſitory*; he will receive, I am perſuaded, no inconſiderable portion of information and delight.

" This book begins with the ſame expreſſion as the book of " Joſhua. That of Joſhua begins, chap. i. ver. 1, *Now after*

" *the*

" *the death of Moſes*, &c. and this of Judges begins, *Now after* " *the death of Joſhua*, &c. This, and the ſimilarity of ſtyle " between the books, indicate that they are the work of the " ſame author." *

The firſt edition of Pope's Dunciad began thus:

Books and the man I ſing, the firſt who brings
The Smithfield Muſes to the ear of kings:

and Virgil's Æneid thus:

Arms and the man I ſing, the firſt who bore
His courſe to Latium from the Trojan ſhore.

" This, and the ſimilarity of ſtile between the two books," together with the correſpondence of the ſubject, which is of the heroic caſt, " indicate that the Dunciad and the Æneid are the work of the ſame author:" and therefore the man is a ninny-hammer, and a dolt, and a noodle, who pretends to aſſert, that Pope and Virgil were not actually the ſame perſon. All external teſtimony upon this ſubject is impertinent and fruitleſs. The point is proved from the books themſelves, " without any auxiliary evidence whatever;" and there is an end of the matter at once. I have proved from arguments no leſs unexceptionable, that " every book in the Bible, from Geneſis to Judges, is without authenticity."

Dicite, Io Pæan! et Io bis dicite Pæan!
Decidit in caſſes præda petita meas!

" I have now gone through all the books in the firſt part of " the Bible, to which the names of perſons are affixed, as be- " ing the authors of thoſe books, and which the church, ſtiling " itſelf the Chriſtian church, have impoſed upon the world as " the writings of Moſes, Joſhua, and Samuel; and I have " detected and proved the falſhood of this impoſition. And " now, ye prieſts, of every deſcription, who have preached and " written againſt the former part of the *Age of Reaſon*, what " have ye to ſay?" †

What have we to ſay? Why, very little indeed; namely, that *Thomas Paine*, citizen of France, member of the French Convention,

* Page 21. † Page 25.

Convention, and author of the Age of Reaſon, is, to the beſt of my knowledge and the trueſt atteſtation of my conſcience, the moſt impenetrably ſtupid and futile braggadocio, that ever violated the ſacred feeling of ſelf-veneration, and every principle of literary integrity, in undertaking, without candour, without modeſty, and without knowledge, to canvaſs that multifarious and comprehenſive topic, the evidences of revelation! It is merely, in fact, the juſt reputation, which his honeſt intrepidity and the native vigour of his intellect has conferred on his political publications, and the conſequent popularity of his name, which cannot fail of attracting notice to his theological reveries, however fantaſtical and ſenſeleſs; it is theſe conſiderations alone, I ſay, that can juſtify for a moment any writer whatſoever, (at no loſs for a laudable diſtribution of his time, and unwilling to delude the public by raiſing trifles into importance, with the breath of oppoſition, and giving ſubſtance to a ſhadow) for ſitting down to a deliberate examination of ſuch a book. Through the whole courſe of a life conſecrated, with little deviation, to truth and letters, I have encountered no adventure more to be regretted as an ineligible expenditure of precious moments, than the neceſſity, impoſed in ſome meaſure upon me, of ſetting up a bulwark to this adverſary, in compliment to the probable opinion of this miſerable pop-gun. The completeſt triumph over ſo mean a foe would not conpenſate the degradation of encounter.

"In the ſame book the hiſtory ſometimes contradicts itſelf: "for example, in the ſecond book of Kings, chap. i. ver. 8, "we are told, but in rather ambiguous terms, that after the "death of Ahaziah, king of Iſrael, Jehoram, or Joram, (who "was of the houſe of Ahab,) reigned in his ſtead in the "*ſecond year* of Jehoram, or Joram, ſon of Jehoſhaphat, king "of Judah;—and in chap. viii. ver. 16, of the ſame book, it "is ſaid, And in the *fifth year* of Joram, the ſon of Ahab, king "of Iſrael, Jehoſhaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram, "the ſon of Jehoſhaphat, king of Judah, began to reign: that "is, one chapter ſays, that Joram of Judah began to reign in

"the

" the *ſecond year* of Joram of Iſrael; and the other chapter " ſays, that Joram of Iſrael began to reign in the *fifth year* of " Joram of Judah."*

Now granting all this to be exactly true according to the aggravation of this ſtatement, and explicable upon no principles of reaſonable interpretation; has it not been generally pleaded and allowed, that ſuch palpable deviations from accuracy in thoſe particulars, where forgery and impoſture would not fail to be ſcrupulouſly correct, and where that accuracy is moſt eaſily attainable: has it not been allowed, I ſay, univerſally, that ſuch petty diſagreements furniſh the ſtrongeſt preſumption imaginable of independent, unexceptionable teſtimony, free from contrivance and colluſion, and declaratory of honeſt purpoſe? Will not the beſt authenticated hiſtories in the univerſe, whether ancient or modern, ſacred or profane, ſupply the inquirer with abundant inſtances of this ſpecies of aberration and inconſiſtency, eſpecially in dates and numbers? Now if we ſhould not be able to fix the preciſe period, in which a certain king might commence his reign; will it therefore follow, that ſuch a king never could reign at all? And will, moreover, a diſcerning public acknowledge any obligation to a random ſcribbler, who wants employment, for vending ſuch worthleſs ſtuff, interlarded with nauſeous collops of ſelf-applauſe, highly ſeaſoned with virulent abuſe, and profanely decorated with the proſtituted name of *Reaſon?* Oh! *Thomas! Thomas!* thou wanderer from the way which nature had chalked for thy ſteps; let me recommend to thy ſerious notice the ſeaſonable admonition of the Grecian Solon, KNOW THYSELF; or the no leſs important and ſalutary maxim of the Jewiſh moraliſt,† UNDERSTAND FIRST, AND THEN REBUKE!

" This table is either not very honourable for the Bible hiſto-" rians, or not very honourable for the Bible prophets; and I " leave to prieſts, and commentators, who are very learned in

" little things, to ſettle the point of *equitette* between the two;
" and to aſſign a reaſon, why the authors of Kings and Chronicles
" have treated thoſe prophets, whom, in the former part of the
" *Age of Reaſon*, I have conſidered as poets, with as much
" degrading ſilence as any hiſtorian of the preſent day would
" treat Peter Pindar." *

Hence it is plentifully manifeſt, (what, however, might have eſcaped the diſcovery of a heedleſs undiſcerning reader) that our *Thomas Paine* is, beyond controverſy, one of " the learned in GREAT things;" and of this gigantic ſort of learning, our ſon of Anac has already given many moſt delectable demonſtrations! Let the whole choir of Phœbus and the Muſes riſe up and pay this Coryphæus of erudition their reſpectful homage!

Nincompoop! (for inſulted truth and violated honour demand thy true appellation with a vehemence bordering on reproach) if thou findeſt any of thy viſionary audacities unnoticed in future, modeſtly ſuppoſe the genuine reaſon to reſide in their futility, and nothingneſs. If thou haſt ſo little conſcience as to vomit ſuch traſh upon the boſom of the public, reflect at leaſt, that others may have too much conſcience to interrupt their more important avocations, by raking in theſe effuſions of intemperance. Say, is a prophet leſs a prophet, becauſe his predictions are delivered in meaſured phraſe, rather than in the ſimple narrative of proſe? And is this the ſole objection, that thy malice can ſuggeſt, or thy ingenuity deviſe, againſt the pretenſions of the Jewiſh prophets to an inſpired character? What? becauſe the Greeks called, convertibly, their poets by the name of prophets, did that appellation deſtroy their claims to the honours of the poetic tribe? Thou mighteſt as well imagine, that thou thyſelf, from aſſuming the tone and conſequence of a knowing inveſtigator of truth, a ſcientific debater of chronological and hiſtoric queſtions, and by uſurping a ſeat in the chair of reaſon and philoſophy, ſhalt reſcue thyſelf, under the cover of a ſelf-ſufficient garb, and a callous ſkin, from legitimate caſtigation,

* Page 31, 32.

caſtigation, richly due to an illiberal, unprincipled, and unbluſhing ignoramus!

But, with relation to the book of Job,

Thus ſpeaks the maſter of the ſeven-fold face:

"The aſtronomical names Pleïades, Orion, and Arcturus, "are Greek, and not Hebrew names; and as it does not ap- "pear from any thing that is to be found in the Bible, that the "Jews knew any thing of aſtronomy, or that they ſtudied it, "they had no tranſlation for thoſe names into their own "language, but adopted the names as they found them in the "poem." *

That is, then, (for the words will admit no other conſtruction, nor can the reader view them in any other light: elſe, to thoſe who had received no ſpecimens of this man's ſupreme ſottiſhneſs, ſo prodigious a circumſtance were perfectly incredible, and too groſs even for the ſuppoſition of his rankeſt enemy) the terms, employed in the original language of this book, are no other than the pure terms of *Pleiades*, *Orion*, and *Arcturus*, adopted from the Greeks! Is not this, reader! the plain and neceſſary import of the paſſage? Or is ſome miſt envelopping the eye of my own intellect, which diſables me from diſtinguiſhing between truth and falſehood? For I would not willingly labour under ſuch ſtrange deluſion. Why, ſon of Reaſon! the Hebrew names of theſe conſtellations (but Hebrew, or Hottentot, alike to thee) are as diſtinct from the *Pleiades*, *Orion*, and *Arcturus*, of the Greeks, as *Thomas* differs from *erudition*, and *Paine* from *modeſty*: and how great that difference, *John Milton*, the poet, the ſcholar, the Chriſtian, and the republican, ſhall inform thee:

As far remov'd from God and light of heaven,
As from the center thrice to th' utmoſt pole.

After this diſcovery, ſhould a man, gifted with fortitude and patience above his fellows, work his way through the jargon of *Thomas Paine* in the ſucceeding pages; if he ſeeks amuſement, I ſincerely pity his want of occupation; if from the call of duty, I applaud an exhibition of courage and ſelf-denial that fits him

* Page 38.

for a martyr. I myſelf can render no other report of my proſpects and entertainments on the way, than a traveller through the deſerts of Numidia: all is ſterility, vacuity, and duſt! The torment indeed of ſuch a peruſal reminds me of a ſtory ſomewhere told by Plutarch; but the particular treatiſe has eſcaped my memory.

It was cuſtomary, we well know, for the wits and ſages of Greece to be entertained in the courts of the petty kings of Sicily. One of theſe tyrants,—of Agrigentum, I think,—a miſerable poetaſter, was accuſtomed to read his dull productions before the vaſſals of his court, who fed his vanity with a copious incenſe of applauſe and flattery. One of the philoſophers, a more ſtubborn votary of truth and honeſty than the reſt of his aſſociates, was condemned to ſlavery in the mines for refuſing to join in the general plaudit of theſe venal ſycophants. In proceſs of time, however, the relenting tyrant, hoping to ſecure his commendations in future by an act of lenity and oblivion, ſent for the philoſopher from the rigours of his confinement, and readmitted him to the plenitude of favour and hoſpitality. On a ſet occaſion, the royal verſifier was ſponting forth, to the enraptured and admiring audience, one of his notable productions; when, during the recital, our impatient philoſopher, after much ſtruggling on his ſeat, was obſerved to riſe, and prepare for quitting the aſſembly. "How now?" ſays the monarch, with a mixture of ſurprize, diſappointment, and indignation: "Whither are you going ſo "abruptly, in the midſt of my performance?—"Humph!" ſays the philoſopher; "let me alone: I AM GOING TO THE MINES "AGAIN!"

After viewing the ſubject in all it's attitudes and appearances, it is not eaſy, I think, for a man to be engaged in a much more difficult office, than that in which I find myſelf at this moment reluctantly employed. On one hand, the inſult which is offered to truth, integrity, and good manners, by this attack of our ignoble adverſary, whoſe rudeneſs is commenſurate with his unſkilfulneſs, and both are ſuperlative beyond example; ſuch an inſult, I

ſay,

ſay, certainly requires, in an advocate not loſt to ſenſibility of feeling, not wholly unaffected by the importance of his ſubject, and uninfluenced by reſpect for the ſentiments of mankind at large, the moſt undiſguiſed freedom of reprehenſion, in the plaineſt language. On the other hand, however, the propenſity of ſcioliſts of every denomination, in union with the envious, the malignant, and the prudiſh, to accuſe an open and warm expoſtulator of arrogance and defamation, has a tendency to intimidate a feeble ſpirit into a cautious lukewarm inſipidity, that borders, in my judgment, on a cowardly deſertion of the cauſe. The warmeſt energies of invective indignation ſhould not paſs, in a caſe like this, for abuſe and virulence, originating in general miſanthropy, or perſonal vexation; but deſerve rather the commendation of ſuſceptible and decided ſpirits, as a virtue, happily ſtiled by the incomparable *Hales* of *Eton*, "a due CHRISTIAN ANIMOSITY."

What remains, then, for an ingenuous defender of revelation, but to follow the dictates of his undiſguiſed feelings, and to give full ſcope to that vivacity of cenſure, which ſtruggles for exiſtence, when ſuch a cauſe is ſo aſſailed by ſuch a combatant? The candid, I truſt, will weigh the fierceneſs of the patron in an equal balance with the virulence of the foe; they will remember who was the aggreſſor on this occaſion, and judge accordingly.* In any event, I ſhall diſcharge my own conſcience to rectitude, to revelation, and to myſelf.

After this conciliatory application to the generoſity of my reader, I proceed in this irkſome taſk, and enter the ſlaughter houſe again; all blood, and no brains!

The paſſage, which I ſhall next produce, is a curioſity in it's kind; not as conveying a formidable objection, or requiring a grave reply; but as a very happy and lively deſcription of our polemic's own caſe, if you put only *Thomas Paine* for *Jeremiah*.

* Tum, ſi quis eſt, qui dictum in ſe inclementius
Exiſtimabit eſſe, ſic exiſtimet;
Reſponſum, non dictum, eſſe, quia læſit prior. *Terent. Prol. Eunuch.*

——— mutato nomine, de te
Fabula narratur.

"It is not poſſible that any one man, and more particularly "Jeremiah, could have been the writer of this book. *The errors* "*are ſuch, as could not have been committed by any perſon ſitting down* "*to compoſe a work. Were I, or any other man, to write in ſuch a* "*diſordered manner, no body would read what was written; and* "*every body would ſuppoſe, that the writer was in a ſtate of inſanity.* "*The only way, therefore, to account for the diſorder is, that the book* "*is a medley of detached unauthenticated anecdotes, put together by* "*ſome ſtupid book-maker, under the name of Jeremiah;* becauſe "many of them refer to him, and to the circumſtances of the "times he lived in."*

In the mean time, I had never doubted, but ſomething not unworthy of animadverſion,—ſomething, I mean, that might have ſerved indirectly as a conductor at leaſt to entertainment or inſtructive reflection, of ſome kind or other, would have fallen in our way, before we arrived at the end of theſe railings againſt the Jewiſh prophets. But no; all is frivolous cavil, and deſpicable vapouring; weariſome to read, fruitleſs to contemplate, and beneath reply. One flouriſh of ſelf-applauſe, with which this diviſion of the Age of Reaſon receives it's triumphant termination, ſhall be extracted, for the diverſion of the reader.

"I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go "through a wood with an axe on his ſhoulder, and fell trees. "Here they lie; and the prieſts, if they can, may replant them. "They may, perhaps, ſtick them in the ground, but they will "never make them grow.——I paſs on to the books of the New "Teſtament." †

I verily believe, that the records of literary events among any people, at any period of time, cannot ſupply ſuch a contemptible vaunt of a ſcribbler ſo totally illiterate, ſo eſſentially unfurniſhed with every qualification, whether of intellect or diſpoſition, for a competent diſcuſſion of this extenſive and well-debated ſubject, as the evidences of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations: a ſubject,

* Page 52. † Ibid.

ject, if intrinſically inſignificant from it's own nature, inveſted at leaſt with accidental conſequence, from the long acceptance and deep veneration of mankind. As there is a morality of underſtanding, as well as a morality of the heart, and both may be alike perverted and miſapplied, to the diſgrace of the individual, as a ſubject of rationality and virtue, and to the injury of the community at large; *Thomas Paine* appears to me, in his intellectual capacity, as one of the moſt immoral of the human race. But the intolerable enormity of this coxcomb, the pompous inanity of the boaſter, exceeds all precedent; and cannot be exemplified more adequately than in the following ludicrous application.

A cock, within a ſtable pent,
Was ſtrutting o'er ſome heaps of dung;
And aye, as round and round he went,
The mettled courſers ſtampt and ſlung.
"Bravo!" ſaid he: "a glorious noiſe!
"We keep a tolerable pother:
"But let's take care, my merry boys!
"WE TREAD NOT UPON ONE ANOTHER."

So much ſound is the invariable reſult of emptineſs. True genius, ſolid ſenſe, and rare endowments, are ever humble, unpreſuming, and ſedate; and, above all, one ſo accompliſhed conſiders an interference with a ſubject which he has not thoroughly diſcuſſed, nor enjoyed opportunities of contemplating in all it's poſitions, and in all it's parts, as an act of audacious profligacy. Let not the lover of the goſpel alarm himſelf prematurely, by the appearance of ſo much confidence and conceit in this age of *reaſon:*

Our Bible was not made to ſuffer
By ſuch a braggadocio huffer.

We will now accompany our gnoſtic diſputant from his perſonal puffs to his cavils on the New Teſtament.

"The New Teſtament, they tell us, is founded upon the prophe-
"cies of the Old; if ſo, it muſt follow the fate of it's foundation."

Thomas Paine's radical ignorance of the points, which he has preſumed to diſcuſs, renders him unable to ſtate the moſt common

and notorious truths with the ſmalleſt degree of accuracy, clearneſs, and propriety. Such a deſcription of the baſis, on which the credibility of the New Teſtament repoſes, was, I believe, never yet fabricated by man, learned or unlearned, friend or foe to revelation. The authenticity of the New Teſtament is ſeparately grounded upon evidences of it's own, hiſtorical, moral, and prophetical. Theſe evidences are no further aſſociated and interwoven with thoſe of the Jewiſh ſcriptures, than as Chriſtianity profeſſes itſelf to be a completion of the former diſpenſation, pre-ſuppoſing and allowing the divine delegation of the Jewiſh lawgiver. But for a man to lay down, as a fundamental and introductory propoſition to all his reaſonings, that "the New Teſtament is founded upon the prophecies of the Old," is the language of a man devoid of all clear perception of the ſubject before him; one "who know s nithe what he ſays, nor whereof he affirms." *

After this untoward entrance on our new department of the controverſy, the ſagacious reader will conceive but an unpleaſant prognoſtication of the entertainment and information, which he is likely to derive from ſuch a ſpeculator, in his future progreſs.

"I lay it down as a poſition which cannot be controverted, "that the *diſagreement* of the parts of a ſtory proves the *whole* "*cannot be true.*" †

Now this propoſition, ſo dogmatically propounded by our champion of deiſm, as an opinion which cannot be diſputed, a mind of the leaſt diſcernment will immediately acknowledge either to be moſt ridiculouſly identical; and, of courſe, a ſpecimen of that vulgar rhetorical figure, commonly called *nonſenſe*; or palpably untrue. The impoſſibility of deciding at once between theſe two caſes, ariſes from an ambiguity in our ſophiſter's expreſſion.

If by the words—*the whole cannot be true*—be meant, that there is, from firſt to laſt, no part falſe; this has already been aſſerted in the former clauſe; and our ſcribe is treating us with an idle, fooliſh repetition: if, on the other hand, this ſubtle logician intends

* 1 Tim. i. 7. † Page 66.

intends to maintain, that a leading fact cannot be true, in which there are any circumſtances of diſagreement; what, in reality, can be imagined more unſubſtantial than this poſition, or more frequently contradicted by perpetual experience?

On the late centenary anniverſary, for example, of the Engliſh revolution in 1688, a very general difference of opinion prevailed, reſpecting the proper day of celebration; and, accordingly, in ſome places, the feſtival was fixed for the 4th of November, and in others for the 5th, juſt as the perſuaſion varied with regard to the day on which William III. effected his landing in this country. But, if I ſhould be engaged in debating any point which concerned the arrival of king William, and the fact of the revolution itſelf;—will any man in his ſenſes—will any man, at all capable of comprehending the force and pertinency of an argument, ſurrender his conviction of the reality of thoſe events to a difficulty that may be ſtarted, and, it is poſſible, not ſatisfactorily explained, about the date of their commencement?

Upon the whole, it is tolerably clear, that this ſententious ſage, this paragon of oracular inſtruction, *Thomas Paine* aforeſaid, is frivolous, or inappoſite in his maxim; or labours with ſome conception, which he is unable to deliver with intelligible perſpicuity of phraſe.

All, that our opponent next advances againſt the genealogies of Matthew and Luke, is ſo exceedingly ſtale, and out of date, as muſt excite an invincible ſuſpicion, even in the moſt liberal and candid breaſt, of a man aiming rather at the acquiſition of *ſolid pudding*, than either *empty praiſe*, or unembodied truth. For, ignorant as he is, (and his bittereſt enemy can ſcarcely imprecate upon him a more plentiful proportion of this commodity) he cannot but know what juſt exceptions have been made to the genealogy of Matthew, by ſome of the firmeſt believers of Chriſtianity; who have no more ſecular intereſt in this faith than *Thomas Paine* himſelf; and yet ſee no ſufficient cauſe to reject revelation altogether, for one or more untenable interpolations in the records of his faith. Some of theſe believers alſo have ſhewn themſelves, I think,

think, not inferior (with his leave) in native intellect to our antagoniſt; and, without all peradventure, as far ſuperior in all the accompliſhments of acquired knowledge, as a ſtretch of fancy can eaſily imagine. Here appears, then, ſomething ſo exceedingly diſingenuous in this conduct, ſo inſolvably problematical in any other view whatever, as to countenance, and even conſtrain, a direct explicit charge of wanton cavil, and defect of probity. Should he attempt to evade this imputation by aſſerting, that he is not bound, in the preſent caſe, to regard theſe differences of divines with each other; and that ſuch diſagreements among the profeſſors of revelation amount in themſelves to a ſtrong preſumption of it's falſhood altogether; I ſhould inſiſt, in reply, that an honourable and honeſt adverſary will be contented to encounter the ſtrongeſt poſition of his enemy, if he looks for conqueſt; and not amuſe himſelf and his ſpectators with an idle aſſault upon ſome feeble outworks, while the citadel continues unattempted, and in ſecurity; eſpecially, after ſuch furious boaſtings, and an ardent expectation has been excited of ſome grand atchievement: and finally, to illuſtrate the ſentiment above by a plain example, that different opinions upon peculiarities of Chriſtian doctrine no more annihilate the authenticity of Chriſtianity itſelf, than the oppoſition of the Ptolemaic and Copernican ſyſtems in their theory imply the non-exiſtence of true philoſophy, or eraſe aſtronomy from the number of the ſciences.

Further: From our blind harper upon the hum-drum ſtring of theſe genealogies, and the ſupernatural birth of Jeſus, (for ſatisfaction on which points, recourſe may be had to a variety of intelligent and impartial writers, beyond meaſure more inſtructive and ingenious, even on the ſame ſide of the queſtion, than this illiterate buffoon of deiſm) we find the following remark:

"Can any man of ſerious reflection hazard his future happineſs "upon the belief of a ſtory naturally impoſſible; repugnant to "every idea of decency; and related by perſons already detected "of falſhood?"*

You

* Page 69.

You would expect now moſt certainly, that *Thomas Paine* had found in the New Teſtament ſome explicit propoſition, declaratory of the impoſſibility of ſalvation to every unbeliever in the preternatural generation of Chriſt; and why then did he not produce it? The reaſon is obvious: becauſe he knew very well, that no ſuch declaration could be diſcovered, either directly, or by implication, throughout the ſcriptures: but the purpoſe of a caviller is ſufficiently anſwered by miſrepreſentation, exaggeration, and impoſture. His object ſeems to be, through the paſſport of his fame, to excite notice, and acquire applauſe from the giddy, the thoughtleſs, and unintelligent. Whatever has a tendency to make labour and literature uſeleſs; whatever carries with it an appearance of magnanimity, liberal independence, and ſuperior ſagacity, ſeaſoned with a charge of educational prejudice, and with a ridicule of prieſtcraft, is at all times ſecure of an eager reception from a powerful diviſion of ſociety, who prefer indolent credulity to vigorous diſcuſſion, and the ſpirit of contumacious oppoſition to the humility of patient accommodation to the voice of capable inſtructors. In general, no ſet of people whatever are more implicit in their belief, more devoted to unſubſtantiated tenets, and more enſlaved by viſionary ſyſtems, than the profeſſors of independent ſentiments; the moſt implicit of bigots themſelves, whilſt they deride the paſſive acquieſcence of their neighbours.

I may truly ſay, and without much danger of apparent vanity, that I have made *words* as much my occupation as moſt men of equal opportunities and years; and am in poſſeſſion of a tolerably good ſtock of this valuable article in one language or another: but I do poſitively aſſure my reader, in the full ſincerity of my ſoul, that I am not acquainted with any terms ſufficiently energetic to embody my conceptions of the futility, the ignorance, and abſolute nothingneſs of *Thomas Paine*'s animadverſions on the Evangeliſts, without the hazard of being deemed intolerably indecorous, and immeaſurably abuſive. Not a ſingle inconſiſtency is pointed out by him, not the ſhadow of a difficulty ſtated, that has not been propoſed, conſidered, and confuted, again, and again, and again,

by

by writers of the moſt undiſputed claims to intellectual and moral worth, in all nations and in all languages, where Chriſtianity and civilized manners have prevailed. If it be poſſible that any man can ſuffer himſelf to be impoſed upon by an author of this deſcription, and on this ſubject, ſuch a man muſt be left to the conſequences of his deluſion; a deluſion, that bids defiance to the application of rationality, as originating in a total eſtrangement from every thing diſtinguiſhed by the name of ſolid argument, judicious cenſure, and deliberate inveſtigation. In ſhort, to adopt the comprehenſive ejaculation of the comic Muſe,

——————Ipſa, ſi cupiat, SALUS
Servare prorsùs non poteſt hanc familiam.

If ever Chriſtianity deſired a proper foil for a more luminous exhibition of her native brightneſs; if ſhe could ever frame a wiſh to adorn her triumphs by an impotent and outrageous enemy, and ſaid within herſelf, "O! that mine adverſary would write a book!" ſhe has now been gratified to the laſt extent of her fondeſt aſpirations: that foil is "the Age of Reaſon!"—that enemy is *Thomas Paine!* None comparable to this phenomenon of polemic chivalry ever yet iſſued "from the eaſt or weſt, nor yet from the ſouth:"

None but himſelf can be his parallel.

Reader! let us breathe a little!

I have gone forwards, looking, and looking, page after page, for ſome incidental paſſage, on which my own buſy head might be employed, and thy attention pardonably detained for a few minutes only.* In a fit of deſpair, I ſhall fix upon one at a venture; and it will anſwer our purpoſe, perhaps, as well as any other; for, in truth, where every remark is equally edifying and judicious, you can ſcarcely chooſe amiſs.

"As

* Defeſſus ſum ambulando. Ut, Syre, te cum tuâ
Monſtratione magnus perdat Jùppiter!
Perreptavi uſque omne oppidum; ad portam, ad lacum:
Quo non? nec fabrica illi ulla erat, nec fratrem homo
Vidiſſe ſe aibat quiſquam.

Terent. Adelph.

"As to the account of Chriſt being ſeen by more than five hun-
"dred at once, it is Paul only who ſays it, and not the five
"hundred who ſay it for themſelves. It is therefore the teſti-
"mony but of one man, and that too of a man, who did not, ac-
"cording to the ſame account, believe a word of the matter him-
"ſelf, at the time it is ſaid to have happened. His evidence,
"ſuppoſing him to have been the writer of the 15th chapter of 1
"Corinthians, where this account is given, is like that of a man,
"who comes into a court of juſtice to ſwear, that what he had
"ſworn before is falſe." *

If I underſtand him rightly, (and I would not raſhly take upon myſelf the competency of interpreting all he ſays) his propoſition and inference ſtand thus: "Theſe five hundred brethren ſaw Chriſt alive after his reſurrection, at a time, when Paul, who aſſerts them to have ſeen him, was not yet a believer in the Chriſtian revelation." This is the propoſition. Let us now hear the inference; pregnant, I trow, and conciſe, as can be wiſhed: "*Ergo*, theſe five hundred brethren never ſaw Jeſus in ſuch circumſtances; and Paul is a liar, a deliberate wilful liar on this occaſion."

Let us now try this hopeful logic by ſomething analogous, and within the reach of men of the moſt heedleſs apprehenſion.

Thomas Paine denies, that the apoſtles ſaw Jeſus after his reſurrection. But *Thomas Paine* was not born in the days of the apoſtles. *Ergo*, the apoſtles did ſee Jeſus in that condition; and *Thomas Paine* is a liar; like a man who comes into a court of juſtice to ſwear, that he knew, what he now ſwears to be falſe, before he was born!!!"

Let me here relieve the reader with ſome elegant and conciſe reaſoning upon the preſent ſubject. † The tranſition to theſe beauties, from the dullneſs of my opponent, and myſelf, will all but realize the tranſporting deſcription of the poet:

The

* Page 78.

† Ogden's fifth ſermon on the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith.

The ſwain, in barren deſerts, with ſurpriſe,
Sees lilies ſpring, and ſudden verdure riſe;
And ſtarts, amidſt the thirſty wilds, to hear
New falls of water murm'ring on his ear.

"The witneſſes of this important event, the reſurrection of Chriſt, are competent, clear, and full.

"They, who of all men had the beſt knowledge of the perſon of Chriſt, did themſelves *ſee*, and *hear*, and *handle* him after his reſurrection.

"The witneſſes of our Lord's reſurrection were alſo *numerous. He was ſeen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that he was ſeen of five hundred brethren at once;* (what an air of truth in the words that follow!) *of whom the greater part remain unto this preſent.* It is obſtinacy then, or vice, or folly, or any thing but reaſon, that ſupports us, if we refuſe to yield our aſſent, when *we are compaſſed about with ſo great a cloud of witneſſes.*

"Nor are we yet poſſeſſed of the entire amount of their teſtimony, unleſs we reflect, that they were moſt undoubtedly *uncorrupt.* To what end ſhould they attempt to impoſe upon mankind? What intereſts or views of their own were theſe men purſuing? By what human principle could they be influenced?

"Perhaps *ambition.* Yes, you have detected their latent paſſion! They were indeed ambitious; aſpiring to the great, but yet unenvied, honour, of ſuffering in the cauſe of God; the dignity of bearing contempt and inſult, for the ſake of religion, truth, and virtue. Or it was *pleaſure*, perhaps, theſe fooliſh perſons had in view. Fooliſh indeed! if this was the object of their purſuits. Their pleaſures were as little deſirable as their honours. The only pleaſures they expected, or experienced, beſides the ſatisfaction of a good conſcience, and the hopes of another life, were the pleaſures of being ſcourged and beaten; of being impriſoned, and tortured, and killed. *If in this life only we have hope in Chriſt, we are of all men moſt miſerable.*

"Not only *miſerable*, but impious and mad, to abandon their friends,

friends, and family, and country, for the pleaſure of ſpreading a known falſhood, and the reward of dying for the ſupport of it.

"But what ſceptic was ever ſatisfied? What caviller confuted?"

It is not to be expected, that I ſhould endeavour to concentrate the whole collection of evidences in favour of Chriſtianity, in this ſhort performance; or that I ſhould enter at large, for this purpoſe, upon topics, diſcuſſed in a great variety of publications by reaſoners, beyond meaſure, more ſagacious and well-informed than myſelf; nor indeed does our puny adverſary demand ſuch a ſcrupulous inveſtigation of the ſubject from the conſequence of his performance: but one point of eaſy apprehenſion and irreſiſtible cogency may recompenſe the delay of a ſhort and ſimple ſtatement.

The *twenty-fourth* chapter of Matthew is occupied in a detail of circumſtances preceding the deſtruction of the Jewiſh ſtate, and of Jeruſalem itſelf; with other particulars contemporary and ſubſequent to that capital event. Now I may ſafely challenge any ſceptic to produce any teſtimony, or argument whatever, whether hiſtorical or internal, (except what preſumes on the falſhood of the queſtion to be proved, and is therefore contrary to the ſuppoſition)—I challenge, I ſay, any man, to demonſtrate, on ground of moral evidence, the priority of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem to this compoſition; or to ſuggeſt a ſingle probability for ſuch a forgery in the firſt profeſſors of Chriſtianity. The date of this chapter, aſcertainable within a few years (being, as I conceive from every reaſonable deduction, indubitably prior to the cataſtrophe which it predicts) conſtitutes an irrefragable argument for the prophetic character of Jeſus, and for the conſequent authenticity of the goſpel proclaimed by him and his diſciples.

"The contradictions in thoſe books demonſtrate two things. "Firſt, that the writers cannot have been eye-witneſſes and "ear-witneſſes of the matters they relate, or they would have re-"lated them without thoſe contradictions; and conſequently that "the books have not been written by the perſons called apoſtles, "who are ſuppoſed to have been witneſſes of this kind.

"Secondly, that the writers, whoever they were, have not "acted in concerted impoſition; but each writer, ſeparately, and "individually for himſelf, and without the knowledge of the "other."*

Never, certainly, had a random writer ſuch ill luck in all his adventurous aſſertions as the renowned *Thomas Paine*. So then, I ſuppoſe no two eye-witneſſes and ear-witneſſes, agreeing in the main fact, ever were at variance with each other upon ſome minuter circumſtance connected with it? On the contrary, will not the experience of every living wight, whether derived from his converſe with the world around him, or the dead; with books or with mankind; immediately ſuggeſt to his recollection, that this aſſertion of our author is falſe, palpably and abſolutely falſe? I aſk, moreover, have ſuch petty diſcordancies ever yet induced the reflecting part of mankind to reject as fictitious, prominent and ſtriking facts, in connection with other atteſtations and probabilities without number?

As far as the ſecond propoſition of the quotation goes, it conſtitutes one of the moſt creditable arguments in behalf of the veracity of theſe evangeliſts, as upright and independent vouchers; and, in this view, it has been frequently and explicitly inſiſted upon by the defenders of revelation; and is perpetually applied in the tranſactions of common life, without the leaſt objection, as far as I know, to the reaſonableneſs of ſuch aſſumption: nor, I may ſafely aver, would any opponent of Chriſtianity ever have urged a plea of this complexion, in ſupport of his cauſe, who had either his wits about him, or the ſlighteſt acquaintance with the ſtate of the diſpute. But *Thomas Paine* thinks contemptibly of all knowledge but his own; and he will fare accordingly, by becoming the laughing-ſtock of men far beneath himſelf in native vivacity of intellects; but not diſdainful of ſuch aſſiſtances as the learning and ingenuity of others can ſupply. Every particle of his indigeſted ſtuff, unadviſedly thrown out upon this ſubject of *concert*, would diſgrace the very meaneſt proficient in argumentative diſcuſſion, and indeed confutes itſelf. Surely, it is moſt indiſputable,

* Page 81.

table, that a thouſand undeſcribable peculiarities of time, place, and perſonal impreſſion, may occaſion diverſities in narratives, delivered by any number of people privy to the ſame tranſaction, without the ſlighteſt imaginable wiſh to deceive, without any aſſignable motive for wilful miſrepreſentation in this caſe. But a propoſition ſo evident in itſelf, and ſo perpetually exemplified in daily life, diſdains a more elaborate illuſtration.

"Thoſe who are not much acquainted with eccleſiaſtical "hiſtory may ſuppoſe, that the book called the New Teſtament "has exiſted ever ſince the time of Jeſus Chriſt, as they ſuppoſe "that the books aſcribed to Moſes, have exiſted ever ſince the "time of Moſes. But the fact is hiſtorically otherwiſe; there "was no ſuch book as the New Teſtament, till more than three "hundred years after the time that Chriſt is ſaid to have lived."*

I now give *Thomas Paine* (whom every reader muſt begin to pity) his free choice, between the quinteſſence itſelf of downright ignorance, or the conſummation of flagitious falſhood. And, in this offer, I deal with him from a pure determination to be extremely candid at all events, to a degree of reprehenſible tameneſs, I am perſuaded, in the judgment of zealous profeſſors of Chriſtianity: extremely candid, I ſay; for, in my own private opinion, and conformably to the moſt unequivocal ſuggeſtions of my own conſcience, he is indubitably and pre-eminently entitled, beyond every known writer, to the diſtinction of both thoſe ſuperlative qualifications.

The number of other authors, the authenticity of whoſe works no man has ever yet undertaken to call in queſtion, and in which, quotations, in the perfection of verbal accuracy, from the evangeliſts, are regiſtered, is a ſummary and complete confutation of this groſs untruth. A great deal too much reſpect is paid to the incorrigible temerity of ſuch a writer, by the mere condeſcenſion of noticing his unheard-of and unequalled extravagancies; but for the ſake of many, at whoſe hands his pages will certainly arrive, and whoſe modes of life and infelicities of education may have intercepted the means of information on this point; I ſhall

* Page 83.

ſtop to mention one fact only, deciſive, beyond the mutter of objection, on this occaſion. And I muſt intreat the reader, by all means, to reflect within himſelf, what degree of credit ſhould be given to any wild unſupported aſſertions of ſuch a controverſialiſt as our opponent, who thus ſpeaks, whether knowingly or maliciouſly, in direct contradiction to matters of fact fully eſtabliſhed, and univerſally received, without one diſſenting voice. If an author like this be ever right in his aſſeverations on queſtions of this kind, he is right by accident; and is moſt obviouſly unqualified for delivering to the world any critical animadverſions, on which an honeſt reader can be juſtified in forming his creed, and regulating his opinion. After this precaution and admonition, I can only ſay, that all other arguments in oppoſition to this aſſertion before us, after the ſtatement immediately enſuing, were in the laſt degree ſuperfluous with reſpect to the cauſe in hand, and inſulting to the public.

Origen was born in the fifth year, or thereabouts, of the reign of *Commodus*, the Roman emperor; that is, according to the hiſtories of Rome, in the year 185 from the birth of Chriſt. He lived 69 years; which will place his death about the beginning of *Valerian*'s reign; that is, nearly A. D. 253. This *Origen* wrote a vindication of Chriſtianity againſt an Epicurean unbeliever, and reſolute active adverſary of revelation in thoſe days, called Celſus. We will ſuppoſe this book to have been written by Origen 23 years before he died, for the ſake of preſerving an even number; or in the 230th year of Chriſt. Now, in this vindication, a very large portion of the New Teſtament is quoted verbatim, agreeably to the preſent ſtate of the text in our copies; and portions not of the goſpels only, but the epiſtles alſo. Here then is irrefragable and inconteſtible proof of the exiſtence of the New Teſtament at leaſt 70 years before the concluſion of the third century: I ſay, at leaſt; becauſe Celſus evidently was acquainted with the written records of the goſpel; and how long his performance preceded that of Origen, I have not diſcovered. And yet, gentle reader! if the reveries of *Thomas Paine* muſt be regarded,

regarded, *there was no ſuch book as the New Teſtament till* MORE THAN THREE HUNDRED YEARS *after the time that Chriſt is ſaid to have lived!* This is the great illuminator of the times! the bright ornament of this age of reaſon! the glorious example of rationality!

Come, ye ſons of reaſon! ye diſciples of true philoſophy! come, and imbibe the ſentiments of truth from his venerable lips!

Hear him, ye deaf! and all ye blind, behold!

Alas! the ſtripes of argumentation, and the laſh of words, have too much ſubtlety in their nature, and too much ſmoothneſs in their application, to reach the remote ſenſations of ſuch a hardy renegado. I could almoſt find in my heart, tender and compaſſionate as I am! to wiſh him, but for his own ſake only, a *material* viſitation upon his outward fellow:

To wiſh him cudgell'd, till he know
What wood the cudgel's of by th' blow:
To wiſh him ſtrapp'd, till he tell whether
The ſtrap be Spaniſh, or neat's leather.

"The reader will ſee by theſe extracts that the authenticity of "the books of the New Teſtament was denied, and the books "treated as tales, forgeries, and lies, at the time they were "voted to be the word of God." *

Or rather, I think, if the reader have any knowledge of the ſubject, or have even paid any attention to the few obſervations advanced by me from a multitudinous aggregate of evidence to the ſame effect, he will ſee by theſe extracts, that the rationality of our ſpecies has been degraded and inſulted in every age by a race of lying cavillers, witleſs coxcombs, and unbluſhing blockheads; and, to my apprehenſion, it is but too evident, that ſomebody (whom I ſhall chooſe the reader to diſcover for himſelf, without an expreſs ſpecification on my part, as this might be thought a violation of decorum and good manners) has been taking a good deal of pains, and not ineffectually, to prove the

* Page 85.

generation of theſe hopeful gentlemen not yet extinct in the eighteenth century.

" The authenticity of the book of Homer, ſo far as regards " the authorſhip, is much better eſtabliſhed than that of the " New Teſtament, though Homer is a thouſand years the more " ancient.*

Indeed, Mr. *Thomas Paine*, you muſt be at the bottom a very learned man, or at leaſt endued with thoſe intuitive glances of penetration, that make the profoundeſt learning mere lumber of the brain, mere cumberſome ſuperfluity. You talk of Homer as familiarly and deciſively, as if you had not merely known the man, but given him the cordial ſqueeze of your *fraternal embrace!* A fine old fellow he muſt have been, I warrant him! Oh! how I envy you this acquaintance! I know a little of him myſelf, but in his works only. Let me ſee, as the Doctor ſays in Fielding:

Ton dapamibomenos poluphloiſboio thalaſſes!

Aye! I have not forgot him quite.

Why, man! it is known from Herodotus, and abundance of other teſtimony, that no one circumſtance of antiquity was involved, even at that time, in more obſcurity than the biography of Homer. The period in which he lived, his country, his parents, and even his very name, are to this day unknown; and were no better known ſo far back as two thouſand two hundred years ago; within perhaps a century or two of his exiſtence. I ſhould be heartily glad, if you could find leiſure from your works of *Reaſon*, from your laborious and conſcientious reſearches into the hiſtorical and moral evidences of Judaiſm and the Goſpel, to give the republic of letters but a ſmall diſſertation now, upon the life and works of *Homer!* We ſhould have, I doubt not, *multum in parvo;* a wonderful profuſion of light and knowledge in a ſmall compaſs. You would ſettle all controverſies with a daſh of you pen; I will engage for you before-hand, you will elucidate, confute, and eſtabliſh, with as much efficacy and perſpicuity, all the circumſtances which have divided the ancient and

* Page 86.

and modern literati upon that topic, as you have already done, to the incalculable benefit of the human race, to all poſterity, in your exercitations on the Bible and New Teſtament.

" There were but few that could have compoſed Euclid's " Elements, becauſe none but an exceeding good geometrician " could have been the author of that work.—Of the numerous " prieſts or parſons of the preſent day, biſhops and all, every " one of them can make a ſermon, or tranſlate a ſcrap of Latin, " eſpecially if it has been tranſlated a thouſand times before: " but is there any amongſt them that can write poetry like " Homer, or ſcience like Euclid?" *

We uſed heretofore to be told of, *O! rare Ben Jonſon!* but the exclamation muſt be changed in future to, *O! rare Tom Paine!* Be the ſubject what it will, whether hiſtory, or chronology, or aſtronomy, or geometry, or any thing elſe you pleaſe,† our verſatile genius is equally armed at all points, and is equally formidable in all. Euclid compoſe, as author, the elements under his name! Yes: this fact is juſt as clearly aſcertained, as your late aſſertions about Homer. It is moſt probable that the geometrical propoſitions in the elementary ſyſtem aſcribed to Euclid, thoſe I mean purely ſuch, of the former books, were merely collected by him, and digeſted into their preſent order. We know at leaſt, that ſome of the very capital theorems were diſcovered long before his time; and, if we conſider how many introductory propoſitions were neceſſary to the demonſtration of theſe, and how extremely probable it is that ſuch original geniuſes purſued and enlarged their diſcoveries in geometry; but little, perhaps, will remain for the private claims of Euclid himſelf. But, be this as it will, *Thomas Paine* appears from his ſtyle of affirmation, characteriſtic of ſheer ignorance, and undaunted effrontery, to know

* Page 86 and 87.

† ——————— fac periclum in litteris,
Fac in palæſtrâ, in muſicis: quæ liberum
Scire æquum eſt adoleſcentem, ſollertem dabo.

Ter. Eun.

know exactly nothing at all about the queſtion, either one way or the other. As, however, (to make an application of this extraneous debate to the topic under diſcuſſion,) the perſon of the author is of no conſideration with regard to the truth and utility of theſe elements; ſo, in behalf of the ſcriptures, and the goſpel-facts, the nature of their other evidence leaves no room for uneaſineſs on the ſubject of authenticity; though we ſhould allow, that the hiſtories themſelves were not compiled by the very individuals whoſe name they bear. Such a conceſſion is, at the ſame time, in no wiſe neceſſary on this occaſion, nor extorted by *Thomas Paine*.

"The ſum total of a parſon's learning, with very few excep-
"tions, is, a b, ab, and hic, hæc, hoc; and their knowledge of
"ſcience is, three times one is three; and this is more than ſuf-
"ficient to have enabled them, had they lived at the time, to have
"written all the books of the New Teſtament." *

It is a very fortunate event for me, who am engaged in this controverſy with our *miſo-parſon*, and have always been exceedingly greedy of all knowledge within my reach, that I am no *parſon*; and very great reaſon indeed have I to gratulate myſelf upon it. I ſhould never elſe, it is too clear, have got out of my horn-book to this very day!—Now I could not conceive before, how *Thomas Paine* had amaſſed his wonderful ſtores of *learning*: but the quotation before us makes the whole matter as luminous as if it were written with a ſun-beam: he was not bred up a *parſon!* no: but, I ſuppoſe, (what was infinitely better,) was *born a philoſopher*; ſpringing from his mother, like the dragon's teeth of Cadmus, in compleat armour; and, like them too, we ſee, ready to knock on the head, with his weapons, every—believer in revelation.

Our wonder-working logician now directs his attention to St. Paul's Epiſtles; and from his obſervations here, I learn a leſſon of ſalutary caution, which will ſecure me more effectually, I truſt, from raſh and unqualified aſſertions for the future. I had ſuppoſed,

* Page 87.

poſed, with the concurrence, I believe, of all reaſonable men, whoſe fortitude and perſeverance have enabled them to accompany us throughout on this thorny road, that our ſcribe, in his romances on the Bible and the Goſpels, had proceeded to the very fartheſt exceſſes of ignorance, ſtupidity, and obdurate impudence: but on the epiſtles of the New Teſtament, he exceeds himſelf, and outgoes, with incredible temerity, and a ſottiſhneſs perfectly unaccountable, all his former outgoings and extravagances. *Thomas Paine*, accordingly, will here furniſh the young univerſal-arithmetician with a fine illuſtration of an algebraic quantity, leſs than nothing, and ſatisfy at once, by a poſitive example, the two ſcrupulous incredulity of the Roman poet with his idle *ifs*:

Si minus eſſe poteſt, quàm quod nihil eſſe videmus:

If leſs can be than what we ſee is nought.

Without raking deep in this ſink of buffoonery, let me preſent the reader with an early ſpecimen.

"The doctrine he ſets out to prove by argument, is the reſur-
"rection of the ſame body, and he advances this as an evidence
"of immortality.

"As a matter of choice, as well as of hope, I had rather have
"a better body and a more convenient form, than the preſent."*

The poor man's perceptions are certainly deranged! Either the turbulence of intemperate zeal has addled his brains, or the giddy whirls of ſelf-conceit have produced a depravation of his intellectual eye, that preſents every object involved with miſt, diſtorted in figure, and inverted in poſition. Why, verily, St. Paul is maintaining the very contrary poſition to what you have aſcribed to his pen, and which no mortal could fail to deſcry, unleſs whom the pitiable plight of his underſtanding would not allow to comprehend a meaning, delivered in the plaineſt terms that language can ſupply! "But * ſome man will ſay, How are the dead raiſed up? and, *With what body do they come?*" Now this latter queſ-

* Page 90. † 1 Cor. xv. 35, 42, 43, 44, 50.

tion would be evidently impertinent and abſurd, if the *ſame*, or even a *ſimilar*, body were intended by the writer: and indeed all his ſubſequent argumentation is calculated to prove, from analogy, the reaſonableneſs of diverſity in our future bodies, under the power and will of God. "So alſo is the reſurrection of the dead. It is ſown in corruption, *it is raiſed in incorruption:* it is ſown in diſhonour, *it is raiſed in glory:* it is ſown in weakneſs, *it is raiſed in power:* it is ſown a natural body, *it is raiſed a ſpiritual body.*—Now this I ſay, brethren, that *fleſh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*"

Are additional quotations neceſſary? Can any thing be more evident, than the purpoſe of our apoſtle to plead for the different conſtitution of the intended body from the preſent? In ſhort, without any further ſolicitude in the inveſtigation of this miſerable pamphlet, the reader need be under no apprehenſions, as the premiſes ſufficiently demonſtrate, of a very wide deviation from correctneſs, if he form a judgment in the lump, and conclude at once, that all *Thomas Paine*'s aſſertions, with reſpect to the Chriſtian ſcriptures, are the diametrical oppoſites of the truth. And in this light at leaſt our religious controverſialiſt may be juſtly conſidered as a very reſpectable and edifying model of *negative information.* Juſt, for example, as the word *lucus* is ſaid, by Latin etymologiſts, to mean a *grove*, becauſe NO *light* ſhines through it; and *Parcæ* to ſtand for the *Fates*, becauſe they NEVER *ſpare:* ſo *Thomas Paine* may be deemed, with great propriety, a moſt admirable and ſucceſsful vindicator of revelation and the ſcriptures, in proportion to the pains which he has taken to write AGAINST them. Alas! I fear the improving condition of mankind holds out to us but ſmall encouragement to expect many more ſuch excellent advocates of Chriſtianity!

"Sometimes Paul affects to be a naturaliſt, and to prove his "ſyſtem of reſurrection from the principles of vegetation. "*Thou* "*fool,*" ſays he, "*that which thou ſoweſt is not quickened, except it* "*die.*" To which one might reply in his own language, and ſay,

"Thou

" Thou fool, Paul, that which thou ſoweſt is not quickened, ex-
" cept it die *not;* for the grain that dies in the ground, never
" does, nor can vegetate. The living grains only produce the
" next crop."*

Such language as this, from the mouth of *Thomas Paine*, the moſt tremendous of all poſſible deiſtic dunces! will remind ſome readers, it is not improbable, of the well-known couplet:

Whilſt one fool lolls his tongue out at another,
And ſhakes his empty noddle at his brother.

But, to be ſerious: Paul's illuſtration of the ſubject, from a grain of corn-ſeed, had been employed before by Jeſus: " Verily,† verily, I ſay unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Now the propriety and force of this application, either in the caſe of Jeſus or Paul, is not neceſſarily regulated by the phyſical accuracy of the propoſition, involved in it, but derives it's pertinency from the private perſuaſions of the party, to whom it is addreſſed. A popular tenet may ſurely be very reaſonably employed for the enforcement and elucidation of an argument, without an impediment from the conviction of the reaſoners themſelves on that point. Exactly in the ſame manner, as no one ſcruples to talk with unlettered people about the riſing and ſetting of the ſun, as if the heavens themſelves performed a daily rotation round the earth; not wiſhing at the ſame time any inference to be drawn in confirmation of his own aſſent to this exploded doctrine. Beſides, a doctrine itſelf may be true, though a particular argument (to make our adverſary the largeſt conceſſion in this caſe) adduced in ſupport of it, be deſtitute of all foundation in reaſon and philoſophy.

" The progreſs of an animal, from one ſtate of being to ano-
" ther, as from a worm to a butterfly, applies to the caſe; but

* Page 93, 94. † John xii. 24.

" this of the grain does not ; and ſhews Paul to have been, " what he ſays of others, *a fool.*"*

For my own part, without arrogating to myſelf any accurate information, in this province of the natural philoſopher, I ſhould feel myſelf inclined, from principles of analogy, to controvert the deciſion of our great naturaliſt, *Thomas Paine*, on this article. As a germ of vitality remains unimpaired in the grain, during the corruption and diſſolution of it's integuments, ſo I ſhould be induced to conclude (but I ſpeak with abſolute diffidence, and an entire ſubmiſſion to the better judgment of ſtudents in this realm of nature) that the exiſtence of an inſect is never diſcontinued in the caſe propoſed, but is ſuſpended only in a kind of oblivious torpor, that wraps up all it's powers, till the genial ſeaſon wakes them into a more vigorous exiſtence under a ſhell of diverſified habiliments. Now, if this apprehenſion be well ſounded, the tranſmutation of the butterfly would have been full as inappoſite to the eſtabliſhment of a reſurrection to another life, as the ſuppoſed reviviſcence of a grain of corn ; and conſequently, in this way alſo, upon his own principles, and from his own concluſion, *Thomas Paine* is as great a *fool* as St. *Paul.*

" Should the Bible and Teſtament hereafter fall, it is not I " that have been the occaſion. I have done no more, than ex- " tract the evidence from the confuſed maſs of matters with " which it is mixed, and arrange that evidence in a point of " light to be clearly ſeen, and eaſily comprehended : and having " done this, I leave the reader to judge for himſelf, as I have " judged for myſelf."†

I alſo, after quoting this additional ſpecimen of folly and vain glory, may ſafely ſay, " I leave *Thomas Paine* to the laughter of the world." And indeed moſt heartily rejoiced do I feel myſelf, at effecting my deliverance from the filth and gloom of this Augean

* Page 94. † Page 95.

Augean ſtable, to a clear horizon and a wholeſome atmoſphere:

Eſcap'd the Stygian pool; too ong detain'd
In that obſcure ſojourn!

Before I conclude, however, I ſhall ſoothe the reader's ears, and calm his feelings, grated and ruffled, as they both muſt be, by ſuch rough ungracious controverſy, with the gentle accents and placid reaſonings of an acute diſputant, an intelligent writer, and an amiable man.*

"They, who caſt about for difficulties, will be ſure to find, or make them upon every ſubject: but he that would, upon the foot of reaſon, erect himſelf into a judge, in order to make a wiſe judgment on the ſubject of religion, will not only conſider the doubtful and difficult parts of it, but take a comprehenſive view of the whole, conſider it in all it's parts and relations, trace it to it's original, examine it's principles, effects, and tendencies, it's proofs internal and external: he will diſtinguiſh between the clear points and the obſcure, the certain and the uncertain, the eſſential and circumſtantial, between what is genuine and what foreign: he will conſider the different ſorts of proof, that belong to different things; where evidence is to be expected, where probability may ſuffice, and where it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe there ſhould be doubts and ſcruples. He will proportion his pains and exactneſs to the importance of the inquiry, and check that diſpoſition of his mind to conclude all thoſe notions, groundleſs prejudices, with which it was imbued before it knew the reaſon of them. He will ſilence his paſſions, and liſten to truth: he will endeavour to untie knots, as well as to tie them, and dwell rather on the light ſort of things, than on the obſcure. He will balance the force of his underſtanding with

* *Biſhop Berkely:* ſee Minute Philoſopher, towards the end of the ſixth dialogue.

with the difficulty of the ſubject; and, to render his judgment impartial, hear evidence on all ſides, and, ſo far as he is led by authority, chooſe to follow that of the honeſteſt and wiſeſt men. Now it is my ſincere opinion, the Chriſtian religion may well ſtand the teſt of ſuch an inquiry."

THOMAS PAINE! GO THOU, AND DO LIKEWISE.

THE END.